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MASTERS OF MEN

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MASTERS OF MEN

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"'GO AHEAD — AND BE GOOD.'"

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MASTERS OF MEN

A Romance of the New Navy

BY

MORGAN ROBERTSON
Author of "Spun Yarn," "Where Angels Fear to Tread," etc.

NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.
1901

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To my Wife — a good woman

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MASTERS OF MEN

BOOK I

THE AGE OF STONE

CHAPTER I

A BOY of fifteen was being vigorously cuffed and kicked by a larger boy, and a black-haired girl was speeding toward them on the sidewalk, when from across the street came another boy — red-haired and freckled — who jumped puddles and arrived on the scene coincident with the girl.

"Let my brother alone, you — you — you mean old thing," she cried as, with flashing eyes and fingers working nervously, she confronted the pair.

"Ah, gwan," answered the cuffer, with a quick, comprehensive glance at the working fingers and sharp nails; "he hit me wid a rock."

"He hit me first," screamed the victim. He was a pink-cheeked boy in knickerbockers — the type of boy that is seldom punished at home.

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"Take some one your own size," said the red-haired boy.

"Go chase yourself, Dick Halpin; this ain't your funeral."

"Let up — drop it — let him go!"

"Make him stop. Oh, please make him stop," wailed the girl, changing front at the prospect of a champion.

There was a confused tangle of arms and legs, from which the boy in knickerbockers emerged and sped to the middle of the street; then, while the girl wrung her hands anxiously, the whirl of combat continued until the larger boy shot off at a tangent, and, colliding with the fence, collapsed in an astonished heap. He had not been struck, nor was he hurt, but the strength and courage of the red-haired boy — smaller than himself — was so completely at variance with his record, as to call, first for respect, then analysis and classification; all of which required time and distance. So, with a promise to "square up," he arose and departed, followed by a threatening "get out," from Dick, and a well-aimed stone from the boy in the street.

Dick Halpin, red-haired, slim and under-sized, had no standing as a fighter. Not that he lacked courage, or the quickest of tempers; it simply had not come to him. He possessed a dignity — or, possibly, a lack of dignity — and a quiet geniality

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and insistence of manner, which, with a certain readiness of speech, had always won him his point in schoolboy friction. And in schoolboy ethics there was no legitimate reason for his interfering in this manner. He had seen the treacherously thrown "rock" impinge upon the head of Pig Jones, had watched the pursuit and capture, and knew that the punishment was deserved. But he had also seen over his shoulder the twin sister of the youngster.

She was the new girl in the school, whose father had lately settled in the town and built the largest and finest house that it contained. Unlike her brother, she had made no friends and few acquaintances; but, with her steady dark eyes she had taken the measure of every boy and girl in the school — calmly staring them out of countenance, and finishing by a close inspection of their clothing. Had it been less dispassionate, or had she been less of a mystery, her manner would have been resented; but, as it was, girls turned up their noses only behind her back, and the boys — all but Pig Jones, in whose soul was neither poetry nor reverence — placed her upon a pedestal and did her silent homage. She knew her lessons without apparent study, asked no instructions or favours, and never entered their world except in quest of her brother.

Dick had been inspected early. A stumble and

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slip in front of the school gate had sprawled him at full length in a puddle and lavishly splashed her with mud. His shamefaced "Excuse me" was not answered, and not even the laughter of the boys so harrowed him as the scrutiny he received. She showed no annoyance, but looked into and through his gray eyes as though seeking the reason of a boy's falling in the mud. Then she had turned her back on him.

A little exhilarated by his conquest of Pig, he felt less overpowered by her now and looked frankly into her face. There was the faintest smile at the corners of her mouth, but her momentary agitation had passed and her expression was as inscrutable as ever.

"It was very good of you," she said in her musical, womanly voice. "I wish he had a big brother."

"I wish he had," blurted out Dick.

She smiled openly at this, and looked up the street at her relative, now returning from a short pursuit of Pig.

"I know your name — Richard Halpin — "

"Dick," he interrupted.

"Dick, then — and you know mine. Do you like Georgie?"

Dick did not. He had stopped a "rock" himself a few days before, and had listened to Georgie's outspoken disapproval of red hair; but he

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answered, "Pretty well; though he's not big enough to travel with a fellow of my size."

"But won't you see that he isn't bullied?" she asked earnestly. "He can't defend himself from larger boys; he's sickly and delicate."

Dick blushed. "No, I can't do that," he answered. "I can't fight a little, much less lick the whole crowd. And most of 'em are bigger than me. Besides, your brother picks all the rows himself."

"Then won't you talk to him? He won't listen to me. Will you be his friend — and my friend, too?"

"Yes," he stammered, with wide-open eyes, "if you'll let me; and I'll look out for him all I can, but he must help, and keep out of trouble."

"Thank you; I knew you would."

There was a faint tinge of colour in her face, and she stepped past him with a slight inclination of her head, as if to bid him good morning. Then she turned, smiling frankly, and said: "I was on the way to school. Are you going — Dick?"

So Dick walked to school with Mabel Arthur. She talked of the good points of Georgie — the motherless, abused, and generous Georgie — who, knowing nothing of the alliance in his behalf, and apparently unable to comprehend his sister's new state of mind, convoyed them on the opposite side

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of the street, often looking over to make irrelevant remarks. Dick remembered little of what she said — only her musical voice.

In an ecstasy of pride and embarrassment, from a keen appreciation of his outward defects — his freckles, fiery hair, unpolished shoes, and pocket bulging with a pair of swimming-trunks — Dick passed the staring groups in front of the school, nodding sheepishly to those of the boys who caught his eye, and, parting from Mabel at the girls' door, entered the building by the other, through which a few studious boys were already straggling on toward their desks. Under ordinary circumstances he would have remained outside with the others until the last bell had rung, but this noon he could not — he lacked his usual *sang froid;* he was only sixteen, and had publicly played the young gentleman — escorted a girl to school. Boyhood resents this departure, and he dreaded gibes and jokes.

The schoolhouse was a three-storied brick structure, standing at the end of the village street. Behind it and beyond was vacant land reaching to the river, and across this land, cutting a few fences and stone walls, was a trail used by the boys to reach a famous swimming-hole, with diving-rock and spring-board, a mile up the stream. It was here that Dick expected to go when school closed; and it was because of a recent edict of the

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village fathers and a cross-grained constable that he had brought his swimming-trunks.

His class occupied the second floor of the building. There were a few scholars at their desks as he entered, and going to her seat on the other side of the room was Mabel, who had beaten him up the stairs. Her dark eyes lightened momentarily as she glanced at him, but for that day she gave him no further attention. He put the swimming-trunks in his desk and advanced to the stage where the principal sat at his table.

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CHAPTER II

"HERE'S my money for the team, Mr. Clark," he said, as he laid a half-dollar on the table.

"Very well, Richard — thank you." He opened a drawer and took out two silver quarter-dollars which he pocketed with Dick's half-dollar; then, removing a dollar bill from his note-book, he slipped it into an envelope with other bills, and replaced the envelope in the drawer.

"Now we have it all in bills, Richard."

"Yes, sir," answered Dick, who had eyed the money with a boy's curiosity.

Mr. Clark smiled benignly, and Dick went to his seat. Through the afternoon he was repeatedly reminded that he had risen in popular estimation. Girls — all but Mabel — looked curiously at him across aisles and over desks, boys, one after another, caught his eye and elevated two fingers, a signal which he answered in kind. It meant swimming after school, and he was amazed at the sudden demand for his company by boys older and larger than himself — who had heretofore preferred his room, but he was shrewd enough to understand it.

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Georgie never went swimming, and Pig Jones did not care for Dick's society to-day, but four other boys — all of them older and larger than Dick — surrounded him outside the school. He would have preferred, now, brazenly to join Mabel and walk home with her, but his agreement to go swimming was held binding; so they started toward the swimming-hole, taking, for some reason unspoken among them, but probably because of their number, the country road instead of the trail. This road circled inland and made the journey a half-mile longer.

With big Tom Allen on one side of him, bigger Will Simpson, who had once thrashed the hotel porter, on the other, and Tom Brandes and Ned Brown behind, Dick swaggered out the road. No mention was made of his fight and the resultant acquaintance by the boys — they waited for him to speak and explain; but he was silent. A delicacy that was partly pride impelled him to talk on any other subject.

When the boys had made a half mile of the journey, Dick remembered that he had left his swimming-trunks in his desk. Visions of a cross-grained constable, arrest, and friction at home rose before him, and he halted. "I'll go back and get 'em, boys," he said, "and come out cross-cut. Go ahead, and go slow."

They protested, but in vain; he quitted them

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and raced back. The street in front of the school was vacant. The janitor had not come to close the building, and he mounted the first flight of stairs at a run; a little tired from the exertion, he walked quietly up the last, and opened the door of the schoolroom to see Georgie locking the principal's desk and cramming an envelope into his trousers pocket.

"Hello, Dick," he said, with a red face, but brave front.

"Hello! What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing?"

"After my swimming-pants. What did you take out of that drawer?"

"Nothin'."

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did. Put it back. I know the envelope. You put that money back."

"Well — I won't."

"Then I'll make you. Your sister asked me to look out for you this morning, and I'm goin' to do it, if I have to do it with a club."

"Say, Dick; don't tell her, will you, if I put you on to something? She's dead gone on you."

Partly from indignation, partly from the going home of the shot, Dick's face grew red. But indignation dominated. Advancing on Georgie,

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he said: "I know soft-soap. You put that money back — quick, or I'll wring your neck."

In the end Dick was compelled to choke him before he could get his hand on the envelope; then the other, in a passion of tears, went down the stairs, while Dick counted the money. It was all there, — twenty dollars, — and he tried the drawer, but it would not open.

"The little thief has the key," he muttered; "and I've got to get it or give him away, and she won't thank me for that. Nice contract I've taken."

Not caring to lose the fun up the river, and deciding that any time before school hours in the morning would do to return the money, he put it in his pocket, secured his swimming-trunks, and left the building, taking the short cut across the fields on a run.

There was no one at the swimming-hole when he arrived, but the diving-rock and spring-board were wet, and on the ground was Tom Allen's knife, which he knew well, having once owned it. Satisfied that the boys had come and gone, and wondering why they had not waited, he undressed and took his swim — short because he was alone and because of the load on his mind. When he was clothed again, he pocketed Tom's knife and returned by the country road, finding the boys he had started with on the ball-ground

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across the street from the school. Georgie was with them now, looking on while they listlessly threw the ball one to another.

"Why didn't you wait for me, boys," said Dick, as he joined them. "I hurried as fast as I could."

"We didn't go swimming," answered Will Simpson, after an interval of silence, during which the ball ceased to travel.

"Didn't?" said Dick, in astonishment. "Why, yes, you did. I found Tom's knife there." Tom had drawn near.

"Here's your knife, Tom," he continued, drawing it from his pocket. Tom's hand involuntarily extended to take it, then fell to his side.

"'Tisn't my knife," he said, in a little confusion. "I lost it a long time ago — don't know who it belongs to now."

"It belongs to you, if you lost it," answered Dick. "Take your knife. I don't want it. What's the matter with you all, anyhow?"

They had drawn away from him, all but Tom, who was examining the knife.

"Nothin's the matter with us," he answered, handing the knife back, "I don't want it. We just changed our minds and come back. We didn't go near the river."

"Well, all right, if you didn't; but you were eager enough at the start."

Dick pocketed the knife and sauntered over

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to Georgie, hoping to be able to get the key from him, or at least to talk him into reason; but that young gentleman trotted off with a fine display of indifference, whooping occasionally, like a boy with a clear conscience. It was unwise to pursue him openly, and resolving to catch him after dark, Dick returned to the boys.

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CHAPTER III

THERE was something in the air. The boys stopped talking on his approach, and the ball went lazily back and forth with none of the usual calls for a "catch." Puzzled by their manner and hurt, at last he left them, wondering if it had any connection with the theft of the money.

"If I can't get him to give up the key," he mused, "I'll have to tell on him. Who'd believe that I was trying to shield the little viper, supposing it was missed and found on me? He don't seem to care a hang whether he's found out or not."

It was supper time when he reached home; and, first hiding the money in the stable, he went into the house. At the table his grim-visaged uncle, after eyeing him for a moment, said: "Well, sir, what have you been doing at school to-day?"

"Nothing," he answered shortly, but with a sinking heart.

"Mr. Clark was here half an hour ago looking for you. He didn't tell me what you'd done, but you've been up to some devilment, I'll be bound. I promised your fool mother —"

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Dick turned white, and jabbed viciously at his food.

"I've done nothing, sir," he said slowly, "and the time will come when you'll find it wise to stop calling my mother a fool."

"That will do—that will do," returned his uncle, raising a monitory forefinger.

Dick subsided. There was no love lost between uncle and nephew, though the mild and patient old aunt beside him had always been kind to the boy. Dick had been thrashed through boyhood, and had only escaped it lately by the peculiar way in which he had taken the last, six months before. He had received a harsher beating than, perhaps, his uncle had meant to give him. It was the first time that he had not begged off and wept under punishment, and this possibly prolonged it. All that evening, forbidden to leave the house, he had sat with his elbows on his knees, answering sullenly when spoken to, and staring fixedly at his uncle with eyes that flamed green. He was ordered about, from one chair to another, by the uneasy man, and at last sent to bed, where the gentle old aunt followed and cried over him. Then it was that the green left his eyes, and the tiger-cub became a boy again, sobbing convulsively in his aunt's arms.

The next evening his uncle listened to the following dispassionate words from the now normal

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Dick: "I've seen mother's lawyer. If you lay the weight of your finger on me again, he will apply to the courts for a new guardian." And there was that in the boy's face which impressed the uncle. He had often threatened him since then, but never attempted punishment.

Dick had a very slight remembrance of his mother, but none whatever of his father — a naval officer lost at sea. He was an infant in arms when this had happened, and just able to walk when his mother had brought him to her elder brother's house — the house that she had left, against his wish, to marry the impecunious man who had won her. And here she had wept away her beauty, then her life. And there were some that followed her to the grave who averred that she had died in self-defence — to escape the never-ending recapitulation of her fault — the ceaseless, monotonous variations of "I told you so" dealt to her by her brother. And later, on occasions when the boy, screaming under the lash, could be heard a block away in all directions from his uncle's barn, these neighbours indignantly declared that he was being slowly killed for the money left to him in trust. But these remarks, born solely of sympathy, had little credence or circulation. Though as unpleasant and parsimonious a character as the village contained, the uncle bore a well-proven reputation for integrity which

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stood him in lieu of kindlier elements of mind. Family pride, no doubt, contributed largely to this fundamental honesty, as it certainly did to his resentment at his sister's marriage against his wishes, and to his later desire that her son should be properly reared. He was prouder of his name than of his wealth — prouder still of himself; and his townsmen, knowing this and disliking him personally, had elected him town treasurer year after year, and would unhesitatingly have accepted his mere word of promise in any money transaction.

When Dick had finished supper he put on his hat and left the house. It was late in the evening when he found Georgie and ran him down as a wolf runs a deer. There was argument and persuasion on his side, with a picture of Mabel's grief and shame if the theft was known — and there was jeering and defiance from Georgie; then there was highway robbery and separation, and Dick, with a key in his pocket and a bump on his head from the impact of a "rock," — a supply of which Georgie seemed to carry in his pocket, — went home to bed.

In the morning he was up early and off to school with the money in his pocket, thankful, as he climbed the stairs, that the janitor was busy on the ground floor; and that there was still fifteen minutes before the first bell would ring, giving

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him plenty of time. There was no one in the room as he entered; he approached the principal's table, inserted the key, and found that it worked unevenly, proving that it did not belong to the lock; but at last it turned. He opened the drawer, placed the money in the corner where the principal had lodged it, shut and locked the drawer and turned — to look into the grave face of Mr. Clark, who was coming out of the class-room back of the stage.

"So," he said, slowly and sadly, "you became frightened when you heard that I called, and decided to put it back. I expected you. Did you return it all?"

"It's all there," answered Dick, weakly; then realizing his position, he went on hotly, "I'm no thief — I didn't steal that money."

"Take your seat, sir."

Dick obeyed, and Mr. Clark opened the drawer with his own key and counted the bills. Then seating himself he began writing, and Dick, wildly trying to formulate his defence, knew, with the prescience of the condemned, that the writing was for his uncle's eyes. And how could he clear himself? It seemed that nothing but a direct accusation of Georgie and a truthful statement of fact would answer now; yet he hesitated to make public his motive — to tell of his new friendship and promise to a girl — such a ridicu-

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lous promise, too. But when Mabel came in and smiled as she passed to her seat, his wavering resolution was strengthened. He would clear himself, somehow, but he would not stab her through the brother she loved.

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CHAPTER IV

THE last bell rang, the school assembled, and after the opening exercises and subsequent buzzing and shuffling of books, Mr. Clark tapped his bell — louder than usual — and the hubbub ceased. The principal was a tall, spare man, and his kindly face was unusually stern.

"Before we open school this morning," he began in his slow, steady voice, "we will dispose of a matter that demands immediate attention. You all know about the fund contributed by the boys for the eleven's new suits. It is a matter in no way connected with your studies; but the theft of that money has a vital connection with the school, and I am compelled to take action. We have a thief among us. The last instalment of the fund was contributed yesterday noon by Richard Halpin — Richard Halpin, come forward."

White in the face, Dick arose and advanced to the front.

"Richard Halpin," continued the principal; "you saw where I placed the money yesterday noon. After school you returned, unlocked the drawer with a key of your own, left the building, and ran through the back gate and across

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the vacant lots. I saw you from the window of my house down the street. That afternoon I visited the school and noted the absence of the money. I called at your home and waited for you until nearly supper-time, hoping to induce you to make amends by confessing and by returning the money then; as you did not come, I went home. However, my visit must have become known to you, and you were frightened. I came to school early this morning and saw you return the money to the drawer. Had you admitted your guilt, I should have talked it over with you, but you brazenly denied it."

"I deny it again," declared Dick, bravely; "you saw me running because I wanted to catch up with the boys, and I went cross-lots, too; I had come back for my swimming-trunks."

"You were going in swimming with other boys? What boys?"

"Some of the big fellows — we were going up to the swimming-hole."

"Name the boys you went in swimming with." The principal reached for paper and pencil.

"I didn't go in with them. They didn't wait. I went in alone. They said afterward that they didn't go in."

"They said so? Do you know this? Did you see any boys at all, up there?"

Dick could not understand how the whereabouts

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of himself or the boys bore on the case, but he had no reason to tell anything but truth about the trip up the river, so he answered: —

"Didn't see anybody till I got back, but I found Tom Allen's knife, and the place was all wet · so some one was there."

"Tom Allen," repeated the teacher, writing the name down. "Who else was in the party which started?"

"Will Simpson, Tom Brandes —"

The door burst open, and into the room stormed a big man with a whip in his hand and mud on his boots. There was anger in his sun-burned face, and around him was the atmosphere of horses and cattle.

"Got 'em yet, Mr. Clark — this one of them?" He advanced on Dick, who retreated into an aisle, realizing dimly as he went that trouble was brewing for others as well as himself.

"No, no, Mr. Bronson," said the principal; "be seated, please. This is not one of the boys you want, but he has been a valuable witness. Take a chair, sir, until I dispose of this boy's case; then we will investigate. Were there any others?" he said to Dick. "Name the rest with whom you started up the river. Come forward here."

Dick stepped out of the aisle, watching the big farmer seat himself, and said quietly: "I don't know what's happened, Mr. Clark, but I'm not

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going to say any more about the crowd. If they've done anything, it's not my business to give 'em away."

"You will not name the rest of the boys?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. Go to your seat, pack up your books, and leave the school. You are expelled, pending the action of the board, which will probably confirm your expulsion."

"Is this all, sir," asked Dick, uneasily. "Have I no chance to say anything?"

"What do you wish to say?"

"I say I did not take that money."

"Come. To convince you of the uselessness of further denial, I will confront you with the boy who saw you take the money, and who reported the theft to me. George Arthur, step forward."

This young man left his seat and approached, while Dick watched in amazement. George Arthur was a peculiarly handsome boy — curly-haired and bright-eyed. Halting in front of the school, he half turned, and with his hands down his pockets and legs wide apart, pursed his lips into an expression of fifteen-year-old virtue.

"Tell the school the story you told me at my house."

"I came back," said the boy, in a monotone, facing the scholars, "to get my knife which I left in the g'ography class, and I saw Dick Halpin

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from the recitation room. He took the money, and I came out and told him I'd tell on him, and he wanted me to go halves and keep still, but I wouldn't and ran out, and he followed, telling me to wait and take half, but I said I wasn't a thief and I went over to Mr. Clark's house and told him."

"You lie," yelled Dick.

"Silence," thundered the principal; but Dick was past taking orders. It was a very red boy in red knickerbockers whom he was pursuing down aisles and over red desks and red boys and girls, and he wanted to catch him. A dark-eyed girl screamed, and others followed suit. Scholars left their seats, some to get out of Dick's way, others — the larger boys — to head him off. Georgie was agile and cleared desks easily; close after came the enraged Dick, and behind, through the aisles, a conglomerate surging mob headed by the principal. But at last Dick was tripped, collared by Mr. Clark and marched to his seat.

"Take your books, sir, and go," panted the angry principal.

"I won't till I've had my say," cried Dick, struggling. "Let go of me. He stole that money himself — I saw him. He tells the very story I could have told if I was a sneak. He's the thief."

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Chivalry went to the winds. This was beyond his limitations, and all the promises to all the sisters in the world could not seal his lips; he was too insanely angry. Then, over in the front rank of the girls, he saw Mabel, with her arms about her brother, looking at him with horror in her face. The shock did him good.

"Let me get out, Mr. Clark. I'll go. Let me get my books," he said quietly.

"Go," said the principal sternly, "and if you have a case, take it to the school board."

He released him, and Dick packed his books, while the agitated scholars slowly resumed their seats, those who sat near Dick waiting until he had marched up the aisle and out of the door.

Mr. Clark resumed his position in front of the school. Taking up the list of names from his table, he read off, in a voice which boded ill for hesitaters and halters, the names given him by Dick. "Come forward, all of you," he said. The three boys ranged themselves before him.

"You have seen, young gentlemen," began Mr. Clark, as he eyed them sternly, "the futility of denying a guilty action. Let me advise you. Tell the truth manfully; own up to what you have done. Yesterday afternoon Mr. Bronson saw you going down over his land to your swimming-place. He called on me last evening and asked me to identify you; for, while there, you

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caught his yearling colt, and tied a bush to his tail. Then you laughed and shouted while the colt ran himself to death. A prompt admission will no doubt save you from arrest and leave the matter to be settled by your parents. I speak as your friend and to spare my school the disgrace. Do you admit this? And will you give the names of the others?"

There was admission in their faces. Not expecting the sudden turn of events, they had arranged no concerted denial.

"We've got to admit it, I suppose, sir," said Will Simpson at last, "but we're not bound to give others away. At least I won't."

"That will do; go to your seats. This must be settled out of school." The principal added more writing to the list and turned to the farmer. "Mr. Bronson," said he, "here are the names of these three, and the addresses of their parents."

The farmer took the list, nodded his thanks, and left the building.

Then school opened for the day, but little progress was made in studies.

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CHAPTER V

AFTER school that noon four boys, with gloom in their souls, mustered under a tree on the ball-ground. Not one cared to go home to a dinner which might be seasoned with parental rebuke; so they lounged on the grass, kicking their heels, nibbling grass-bulbs, and occasionally commenting on the hopeless outlook.

As they lay there, Pig Jones joined them and offered sympathy and advice; then Dick Halpin came climbing over the fence at the other side of the field. Swinging his books by the strap, he slowly approached the group under the tree. His lip was swollen and there was trouble in his face; but he was calm and serious as he ran his eye over the party.

"I don't know what's up, boys," he began; "you didn't tell me anything, but if I'd even guessed that anything had happened I wouldn't have told. What is it?"

"We killed a colt," answered Will, as he rolled over to face him. "We didn't mean to — he got away from us. But it wouldn't have been found out if you hadn't had so much to say."

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"And I wouldn't have had a word to say if you'd put me on to it. But you didn't, and I didn't know. I was trying to clear myself. That's why I told where I was going. I wouldn't give any one away."

"Yes, you would," sneered Pig Jones. "Even if you were one o' the gang you'd ha' told on the rest. You proved that to-day — lyin' 'bout the money you stole."

"I tell you I wouldn't," answered Dick, angrily; "and the man who says I stole that money is a liar."

This was strong language, and too defiant altogether from a boy of Dick's size.

"I say you stole it," returned Pig.

"Then you're a liar."

"I say you stole," said Tom Brandes — larger than Pig; Ned Brown repeated it, and Dick, whose face had tightened, answered, "You are a pack of liars, and I can back it up." He dropped his books and flung off his coat; then Will Simpson, who had not yet joined the allied powers, arose in his dignity.

"What?" said he. "Am I a liar?"

"If you say I stole that money, you're a liar," stormed Dick.

"I say you stole it."

"Then you're a liar."

There was a flourish and a tangle of fists, and

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Dick went down. When he arose, his right eye was closing.

"Want any more?" asked his big antagonist. Dick's reply was a tiger-like pounce. Then they clinched; but it was disastrous for Dick. He was punched, choked, squeezed, and at last lifted bodily and launched headlong, falling heavily. He was no match for the other, who was unscathed in the shuffle, and before he arose he was kicked by Pig, who yelled, "Give it to him, fellers — give it to the thief — give it to the tattle-tale." His foot was caught at the second kick by the prostrate boy, and he was thrown; but before Dick could do more than rise to his feet, Tom Allen asked his opinion of his veracity, and the answer brought another knock-down from Tom. Then, to hurry through a painful duty, they all surrounded him, kicking and pounding.

"That'll do, now, that'll do," said Will; "we've killed a colt, and that's enough."

They walked away. Dick arose to a sitting posture and looked after them; but there was no green flame in his half-closed eyes; neither had he seen red during the struggle. These might come later. He had thought, at the last, that he was fighting for his life, and he had even entered the fracas with doubt that was only dominated by his indignation and will. He was now thoroughly subdued, and only in the complete absence

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of all fear will come the destructive rage which turns all things red.

It is hardly probable that Pig's sympathy and advice, or his initiative in the prelude of insult had induced the other four to this extremity of action; they were young and close to Nature, and the species to which they belonged but a few thousand years away from the Age of Stone, when marriage was by capture, and the better warrior was the better wooer, admired by his fellows when successful, clubbed to death before his scornful wife's eyes when wounded or ill. Dick Halpin, by winning and then losing — for some had noted her look of horror — the favour of the school beauty, had called it into force — this second law of Nature; though perhaps not a boy among them would admit, even to himself, that Mabel Arthur was in any way connected with the animus of their assault. But Pig's position was definite — he had 'squared up.'

When they were out of sight, Dick picked up his books and painfully made his way to the river-bank behind the schoolhouse. There he staunched the blood from his nose and bathed his head, which ached and throbbed from his fury of the morning and from the hard knocks it had received. Then he found a shady spot on the bank, and, watching the stream and farm-land beyond, tried to reduce his chaotic thoughts to order.

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CHAPTER VI

"I SEE my finish," he mused. "I'm a thief in this town, and I'm kicked out of school — can't even get the last exam.; hammered, too, till I can't see, just for nothing. What ails them all? I did them no harm. They'd have been found out in time. What'll the old man do? Won't believe me any more than Clark did. The young devil! Who'd think he had the nerve? Oh, I'll fix him for this. But that won't help — I can't clear myself that way. I'm a thief — a proven thief — and nothing 'll disprove it but his confession. And he won't confess — not much. I could choke it out of him, but it wouldn't go. He'd say it was compulsion. Wonder if it would do any good to tell her straight — just how it was. She might get it out of him; but she won't, and if she believed me it would only make her feel bad — and she won't believe me, anyhow. Might as well go home — no, I can't — and won't."

He waited until the second bell had rung — for he did not care to meet the scholars — feeling, as the clang of the last stroke dwindled to silence, the curious, nervous sense of liberty and loneliness which comes to emancipated schoolboys.

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Then, when sure that all were within the building. he picked up his books and crossed the lots to the street. Beyond the school he met Mr. Bronson, the farmer whose colt had been killed, driving out in his buckboard. The farmer scrutinized his face, stopped his horse and beckoned. Dick approached.

"You the boy that got expelled this mornin'?"

"Yes, sir."

"What ails your face?"

"Got done up by the boys."

"What boys?"

"The fellows that killed your colt. They laid me out for telling their names before I knew anything was up."

"All pile on to you?"

"All that could — yes; I guess they all got in a kick or two."

"The young devils! I'll fix 'em, though. Now, I want the names of all that crowd. You didn't tell all of them. Who were the others?"

"You mustn't ask me, sir. I don't feel very bad now about what I said; but I've no quarrel with them about that matter; and I don't believe in tattling, anyhow."

"Well, well, maybe that's right; but I'll find out, just the same. But say, my boy, tell me squarely. Did you take the teacher's money? I

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saw your tantrums at school, and it didn't look like make-believe."

"I did not take it — I saw it taken, and tried to make the little cuss put it back. I had to take it away from him, but I didn't get the key until late that night; so I had to wait till morning before I could return it. Then I was caught at it, and accused by the very one I was trying to shield." He spoke earnestly; he wanted some one to believe him.

"But what did you do it for? Why didn't you go and tell Mr. Clark?"

"I'm not that kind; I don't tell you the names you want."

"Different thing. Malicious mischief and cruelty to dumb brutes is bad enough, but stealing is low down. A thief deserves no such consideration."

"I promised — I told one of his family I'd look out for him a little, and take care of him."

"Sister?"

Dick's face showed red between the bruises, and the farmer grinned.

"So, so," he said; "well, you're pretty young for that. I reckon you'll pull through all right. So long."

Dick watched the broad back of the farmer grow small in the distance, then brought his thoughts back to himself and his future. Here

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was the first practical sympathy which he had received — which had crystallized into: "You'll pull through all right. So long."

Would he pull through all right? The retreating broad back of the farmer told him plainly that if he did, it would be because of his own effort alone. In a few hours he would be hungry, and when he ate it would be of food furnished by a man who had less sympathy for him than had the farmer. But this man held in trust money which would be his when he was of age — how much, he did not know; he had never inquired. But he would find out; and he would ask the lawyer's advice.

He walked briskly down the streets to the business section of the town and opened the office door of the lawyer who had settled his mother's estate. A smirking clerk informed him that the lawyer was out of town on business which would keep him away for a month. With gloomy face he sauntered up the streets toward the school, and, while passing a vacant lot, whirled his school-books high in the air over the fence. With them went his past, and the hopes, plans, friendships, and ambitions which pertained to it. He was no longer a schoolboy, satisfied with praise and a favourable monthly report. The world was before him and against him.

Yet the habit of years guided his wandering

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steps to the vicinity of the school from whose thrall he had escaped; and as he hung over a fence adjoining that of the school grounds, the closing bell sounded from the cupola. The scholars would be out in five minutes.

Acting on a sudden resolve he placed himself near the girls' entrance, where he knew that every scholar in the three departments — except possibly ball-players or swimmers — must pass him; and he was savagely pleased at the results. He was a peculiarly ugly boy just then — scarred, disfigured, and scowling — and in a very ugly mood. Also, he held in his hand an ugly, sharp-edged fence-picket for the benefit of any boy who might feel moved to repeat or duplicate the punishment of the ball-ground.

The news of his disgrace had gone through the three departments at recess and at noon. Every one in the school had known Dick Halpin, but none knew him now. Girls, big and little, shied by him with wide-open, curious eyes, as though they were looking at some strange creature which might bite. Small boys acted similarly, and Georgie made a detour across the street, but said nothing. The larger boys glanced unconcernedly at him, and passed dignifiedly by, Pig Jones only giving sign of recognition — grimacing first, then dodging a sweeping blow of the fence-picket. But it was Mabel whom Dick was waiting to test,

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and down the street the larger boys stopped and watched, equally interested. She came along toward the last, and when she hurried by with the old swift, piercing glance at his face, and turning of her eyes ahead, the heart of the boy tightened, and it seemed to him that the sky was suddenly darker, and the air colder. He laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh — not the mirth of a healthy-minded boy.

A girl a year or so younger than Dick came flying back from the crowd down the street, her hair streaming behind and her blue eyes glowing with indignation and sympathy.

"Oh, Dicky," she said, as she placed her hands on his shoulders and looked into his face. "I want to tell you — I don't believe it — my sister pulled me along, and wouldn't let me speak to you. I just hate that George Arthur; I know you didn't steal it, Dicky. What they been doing to you?"

A lump came in his throat and tears to his eyes. "No, Bessie," he said thickly, "I didn't; I told the truth, and I had a fight over the other thing."

A teacher had come between them. "Come, Bessie, go home." And with a good-night to Dick she went on.

He shouldered his picket and crossed the street to the ball-ground, where in three minutes he was sobbing his heart out to the grass; but it was

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not his trouble that moved him, it was Bessie's sympathy and faith.

Dick's interview with his uncle at supper-time, though stormy and painful, was the least of that day's troubles. It need not be detailed. With sneering and scornful upbraiding the narrow-minded old man flourished Mr. Clark's note and overruled Dick's sullen and defiant denial. Through it all Aunt Mollie shed tears, but attempted no vain mediation. There could be but one ending. An intimation from the angry uncle to the effect that were Dick not his sister's child he would turn him out was promptly met by Dick's declaration that he would save him that trouble — he would go when he had finished his supper, which, with the clothes on his back, he considered himself entitled to.

So, with a kiss and good-by for his agitated aunt, and an unboyish curse for his uncle, Dick Halpin, with two black eyes and a swollen nose, and with nothing in his pockets but a jack-knife and a key — neither of which belonged to him — went out into the gloom of the evening to face the world.

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CHAPTER VII

WITH his hands in his pockets he trudged through the quiet streets and out into the country road, thinking deeply. His headache was gone, and his sore spots, though still alive, not painful enough to prevent a brisk walk, the most conducive to thought in some temperaments, and he reviewed the happenings of the last two days. So rapidly had events crowded one another that it seemed weeks back when he had walked to school with Mabel Arthur — envied of all boys. And viewed in the light of these events, she was more than ever now like a creature of some higher species, or inhabitant of some distant planet, who, without responsibility, had entered his life, done him harm, and left it. But she was still the central figure of his thoughts, taking precedence over the boys who had ill-treated him, the teacher who had misjudged him, the scholars who had snubbed him, and even Bessie and his Aunt Mollie — his only friends now. The first was only a "young un" whose good will he had lately won by a timely rescue of her kitten, and the second was so associated with and overshadowed by the disagreeable personality of his uncle

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that she had failed, with her passive negative temperament, of making any deep or lasting impression on his mind. As for his uncle, he had ceased almost to think of him, and hoped soon to forget him.

He would ask Mr. Bronson for work, study in the evening, finish the senior course, and go to New York, where he would get a position in a store, or office, and study law, or medicine, thus getting a better education than the other boys could get in the high school. And when he was a prosperous man, with good clothes and a silk hat, and a gold watch, he would come back to the village and put up at the hotel. And the only people in the whole town whom he would recognize would be Aunt Mollie and Bessie. He would kick George Arthur out of his way if he came in front of him. He would take Aunt Mollie — without his uncle's permission — and Bessie, out riding, and pass Mabel Arthur on a crossing, where she would have to wait until they passed by. And he wouldn't speak to her or see her at all; but he'd give her a chance later on to speak to him, if she wanted to, and apologize; and when she did, he would just lift his silk hat politely, and —

There was a smothered growl in the rear; then sharp teeth grazed his leg and closed on the slack of his trousers, while he was nearly thrown by the impact of a bulldog who had come down to the gate.

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"Hang it," he exclaimed, "even the dogs are down on me."

He recognized the large frame farmhouse standing back in the darkness as that of Mr. Bronson, and he had once enjoyed a passing acquaintance with the dog; so he spoke to him kindly and firmly. But words count for little with bulldogs on duty, and he tried to kick. The dog dodged, growling the while and gathering in more cloth, until Dick was forced to call for help. The door opened, and in the stream of light far within people stood and peered into the darkness.

"Call your dog away, please, Mr. Bronson," cried Dick. "I can't shake him off."

Two men ran down the path and into the road. One was Mr. Bronson, and the other a giant of a man, who lifted the dog in the air with a mighty kick, just as the cloth began tearing. Half of Dick's left trouser-leg went with the dog, who squeaked once, and trotted into the house, still shaking the cloth.

"It's me, Mr. Bronson," said Dick.

"By ginger! What's the matter? Turned out, or run away?"

"I guess it's both, sir. I can't live home any longer."

"I know that uncle o' yours. He's a nice old plum. Come into the house, boy, and we'll talk it over."

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In spite of his protests that his trousers were torn, he was taken into the large kitchen, where Mrs. Bronson, a cheerful-faced woman, stood with the piece of cloth in her hand — replevined from the dog — and laughed at him. It is given women to laugh at man's calamity. They inherit the tendency with their long hair and the critical faculty, as a sexual characteristic. Observe their uncontrollable risibles on a crowded street when a man falls down, or loses his hat, or makes an undignified jump to save his life. Men do not laugh at the victim. They stop the hat, assist the fallen one to his feet, or mentally anathematize the motorman, and forget the circumstance in a minute.

But though Mrs. Bronson laughed at him, she hustled him into a bedroom, told him to throw out his trousers for her to mend, and go to bed if he pleased. And Dick was pleased — very much. Stretched between cool sheets, he congratulated himself on the happy end to a hard day, and fell asleep, but wakened soon from his own hard breathing, and because of the talk in the kitchen, which concerned him.

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CHAPTER VIII

IN the few embarrassed moments of his stay in the kitchen he had noticed the big man who had kicked the dog, and recognized him as one he had seen at times through his boyhood swinging along the streets from the station to the country road and back — a sunburned man, dressed in the big-collared shirt and wide-bottomed trousers of the navy, who was reputed to be Mr. Bronson's brother. It was his voice, a deep, rolling barytone, which he heard as he wakened.

"Can't tell anything about circumstantial evidence," he was saying. "Things get twisted around mighty curious sometimes, and everything points to the wrong man. On that chance alone I should say that the kid didn't take the money. That's a smart boy — too smart to put back anything he'd lifted."

"But he was seen taking it," said Mr. Bronson's voice. "Another boy saw him and told; that's why he put it back."

"Yes, and tells a likely yarn, too, you say; and this one tells an unlikely yarn. Consequently, I'm with him; I'm on the other side of circum-

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stantial evidence — or positive evidence where there's an object in making it. If t'other kid stole it he couldn't ha' got out of it nicer. Down in the navy yard, on the *Trenton*, Sam Davis, one of the 'prentice boys, finished his time and got his discharge and money. He was a likely youngster and had got up to be captain o' the mizzentop, so he had a good boodle due him — 'bout two hundred. Well, he'd shaken hands all 'round after breakfast, and was just going out the gangway port when something caused him to reach in and feel of his munk-bag — little leather bag we carry our money in when we have any, you know — and there was nothing in it. So, some one had it, sure. He fired his bag and hammock in on deck and swore he wouldn't quit the ship till he got it. It was there when he turned in night before, he said, because, though he admitted being three-sheets-in-the-wind when he came aboard, he was straight enough to make sure of his money 'fore he went to sleep. Well, the officers took up the case and called all us mizzen- and main-top men to quarters while the chief master-at-arms went through our dunnage. They found the roll in my hammock 'tween the mattress and canvas. Then they made me turn out my pockets and found a pocket-piece — a Japanese ten sen — which Sam thought a good deal of and never let go out of his hands. So the thief — which

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was me, 'cording to the evidence — had gone through his pockets as well as his munk-bag while he was sleeping off his drunk."

"You ought to be ashamed to sit there and tell it, Ned Bronson," said Mrs. Bronson's voice.

"I didn't take it. I'd borrowed his knife day before and returned it. The coin must ha' stuck 'tween the blade and handle and dropped out in my pocket without either of us knowing it. It was a penknife, not the big lanyard knife. Well, I had a good record, and swore black and blue that I was innocent, — and even Sam didn't like to believe it, — so they didn't put me in the brig, but let me sling my hammock in the old place, and that night Sam himself cleared me. He had skipped out with his dunnage, got full again, forgot that he was out o' the old ship, and that night sneaked aboard, and the gun-deck corporal stowed him under a gun carriage for the night. 'Bout an hour later he caught him fooling 'round my hammock trying to stow his wad of bills under my mattress. He was sounder asleep than I was, and I'm a pretty sound sleeper. Corporal reported it in the morning, and it cleared me."

"Oh — sleepwalking."

"Yup — and whiskey. A man'll do things when he's drunk that he won't remember till he loads up again. I tell you, circumstantial evidence is no good."

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"I believe it was all made up between you and your friend Sam," said Mrs. Bronson. "You're a bad lot, you sailor men."

"Circumstantial evidence is no good, I tell you."

"'Tain't conclusive, I admit," said Mr. Bronson, "but it's a help. That boy in there knows the names that I need to make up my list. That's all I want of him."

"He's too bright a boy, anyhow, to stagnate around this blasted old town. Send him down to the *Minnesota*, and I'll make a sailor of him. I like that boy; he showed nerve with your d—d dog, and he's got character. Bet you don't get any information out o' him."

Dick listened no more. His mended trousers were inside the door, and he dressed himself. Stepping into the kitchen, he confronted the two men smoking at the table. Mrs. Bronson had disappeared.

"I wasn't asleep, Mr. Bronson," he said, "and I heard." He spoke unevenly, for there was a lump in his throat. Turning to the other, who was regarding him with an amused look in his brown face, he said:—

"You are right, sir; I'll tell on nobody. All I want is a place to work and sleep. Do they have boys of my size in the navy?"

"Lots o' them. Want to enlist?"

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"Yes, sir, I do; I think I would like it. My father was a naval officer."

"It's a tough life, and it makes a machine of a man; but as I understand your case it's about the best thing you can do. Are you healthy — ever have fits?"

"I'm as healthy as I can be. No, I never had fits yet."

"Can you climb?"

"I can climb trees."

"Can you keep your temper when you feel like murder? Can you grip your tongue 'tween your teeth when a young pup just out o' the naval academy calls you a swab, and a soger, and a farmer?"

Dick swiftly reviewed the day's ordeals, and answered: "I could if I had to, sir."

"You'll have to, never fear. Got any money?"

"No, sir — not a cent."

"Well, I'll tell you. You can hoof it to New York, and starve by the way, but 'taint necessary. Fare's eighty cents, and guardian fee's a dollar. I'll go a dollar eighty on you. I'm guardian to three young rapscallions down there now. You'll ship as third-class boy, at nine a month and rations, but you'll only get liberty money until your time is up — when you are of age. By that time you'll have seen something of the world, and can make a better start in life, or ship over again, if

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you like it. You can pay me the dollar eighty in instalments out of your liberty money.

"Bill," he said to the farmer, "let this boy stop here till his face gets in shape again, and if I'm gone then, send him down to the ship. I'll leave you the money."

"Well, all right. But say, youngster, I'll give you the money — I'll make it two dollars — if you give me the names of the other boys."

"No, sir. I'm obliged to Mrs. Bronson, but I'd rather walk out."

"All right, all right," said the farmer, impatiently. "I'll get 'em. Go to bed again. Good luck to you."

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CHAPTER IX

A WEEK later Mabel Arthur was handed a package addressed to her at the post-office. It contained a key, and a letter which she read, and then, hurrying home, read again after supper, in her room. It ran as follows: —

"U.S.S. MINNESOTA, SEPT., 1893.

"*Miss Mabel Arthur:* Here is the key which your brother used to open Mr. Clark's desk that day you asked me to look out for him. It was because I said I would that I did not want to give him away. So I took the money away from him, but he had the key, and late that night I took the key away from him, all because I promised you. You know how I was caught putting the money back next morning; but you believed I stole it the same as all the others did. I did not take it, but I wanted to keep my promise to you. I loved you, and you are not worth powder to blow you up.

"Yours truly,

"RICHARD HALPIN.

"P. S. I've shipped in the navy, and you will never see me again."

Mabel folded the letter, and idly tapping the window-sill with the key, watched the details of the garden without disappear in the gathering darkness; then she arose and approached an old-

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fashioned writing-desk, to put the letter away. There was no key in the lock, and almost involuntarily she inserted the one in her hand; it turned the bolt easily. She lighted the gas, and with eyes that were large with growing terror, examined the key. It was old-fashioned as the desk, but told her nothing. She examined every keyhole in the room. They all contained keys, which, one by one, she tried in the desk; but none would turn the lock but the first. She opened the desk, and carefully blotting out with ink the lines declaring Dick's sentiments and his estimate of her value in powder, threw herself face down on the bed.

An hour later her brother's whoop on the street without told of his arrival for the night, and when he entered the house she called him into her room. Fifteen minutes later she called her father from the library, and five minutes after she was in the street with the key and letter in her hand, speeding toward the residence of Mr. Clark and stopping her ears against a harrowing sound — a sound which brought neighbours out of doors and caused many a jocular comment over the fence, a boy's wailing screams punctuated by the sharp thwack of a trunk strap.

Neither she nor her brother attended school again; but on the following morning Mr. Clark, with a troubled face, addressed the scholars, and

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announced the complete exculpation of Richard Halpin from the offence with which he had been charged, by the confession of the real culprit, whose name he saw no occasion to divulge. He added a few moral reflections concerning the peril of too hasty conclusions based upon the outward seeming of things, and warned them of the folly of yielding under adverse pressure, as Richard Halpin from a lack of moral stamina had yielded, to the extent of embracing, openly and brazenly, disgraceful fighting, — he had attacked his schoolmates, it seemed, — and, as had become known next morning, running away from home. However, if any of the scholars should happen to know where he was, it would be advisable to let him know of his exoneration.

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BOOK II

THE AGE OF IRON

CHAPTER X

THERE was smothered excitement throughout the ship. A boy had run up the gun-deck main-hatch ladder three steps at a time, dodged forward and mounted the fore-hatch ladder to the spar-deck at the same speed; then he had sped to the closed-in space on the forecastle. Another boy had followed, then another; and there was that in their faces to induce men and boys lounging on the deck and sitting in ports to close books with a snap, to put away sewing-gear, or hurriedly finish tasks they had "sogered" at, and join the scattering streams of blue-jackets crowding up from the decks below.

Ensign Breen, officer of the deck, shivering at the gangway in a closely buttoned overcoat, saw the commotion and mustering of men and boys, and turned his back. He was a young man, not twenty-four, with a pleasant face, as brown as a Caucasian's may become — nearly as brown as his hair and cheery eyes; for he was just back from a tropic station, and had not yet bleached out or

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grown accustomed to the wintry chill of this navy-yard berth.

"Who is it this time, Quartermaster?" he asked of a big man who stood near him.

"Don't know both, sir," answered the Quartermaster, touching his cap; "but one of 'em's my boy. He's lickin' all hands as fast as they'll take it."

"What's his name?"

"Halpin, sir; apprentice. He's one of the *Maine's* crowd. I'm his guardian."

"Halpin? I've noticed him. What's his grudge against all hands?"

"No grudge, sir. But you see, when he shipped four years ago, he was an under-built little runt, and every small scrapper in the ship who could box thought it right and proper to soak Dick because he was a red-head. He'd fight 'em, but always got done up, until the cap'n o' the hold, and a few more of us, noticed his quick movements, and trained him in boxing. Then came his turn, and he had all the fun. He was cock-o'-the-walk 'fore he went to Newport. He isn't quarrelsome, sir; but there's a lot o' strange men in from the Southern Station, and the buckoes among 'em don't know Dick, and he looks so soft and innocent that they begin rubbing his fur wrong way, and then they get surprised."

The young officer smiled, and he looked at his

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watch. It was the first dog-watch, and there was twenty minutes before the time for the next disturbance of the ship's company — mess formation.

"Bronson," he said in a tone that the orderly and messenger boy at the gangway could not hear, "go forward and watch it unofficially. Report the result to me. Don't let it go too far, though."

"Very good, sir," answered the quartermaster, with a grin. He left the bridge, went forward and crowded his way into a circle of fully a hundred men and boys surrounding two who, stripped to undershirts, were resting after a round, and listening to advice from their seconds. One was Dick Halpin, twenty years old, five feet ten inches in height, square shouldered, full-chested, with his freckles drowned in darker tan, and his hair changed by the action of the sun and wind to a color which might be called coppery, but never red. It was uncut and wavy, — too long for a landsman careful of his personal appearance, — but it formed an agreeable border to his sunburned face, and harmonized peculiarly with his gray eyes.

His antagonist was taller and heavier — and slower, as evidenced by his well-marked face and hard breathing. The fight, short as it had been, was nearly finished when Bronson arrived. As he elbowed his way to the front rank of excited and whispering onlookers, time was called, and the

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combat resumed. The larger man struck wildly and heavily, making no effort to guard; but not a blow reached the agile, writhing, whirling body of the other, who dodged and ducked, sprang forward and back, planting light, stinging, and exasperating taps on his face and breast with almost the quickness of a rattlesnake's stroke — smiling through it all. Three times Dick circled around, then, seeing an opening in the lax guard of his tired opponent, he sent his right fist, with the weight of the body behind, squarely under his ear. The impact lifted the man, large as he was, off his feet, and he fell heavily to the deck. Time was called as he began to move.

A pent-up hubbub broke loose. The enthusiasm, though softly expressed, was genuine and heartfelt. Boys surrounded Dick and shook hands, glad of the privilege. Bronson clapped him on the back with a force that made him wince, and then disappeared. "Bully for Dick — Cock-o'-the-walk now, hey, Dick," said the boys. "Dick's a Greco-Romo-Boxo-wrastlo — Dick'll be Jimmy Legs yet — no, he won't — not over two hours — he'd be disrated — Dick, you want to do up Jimmy Legs next; he got me two hours guard duty — go for him, Dick." A small boy, the pet scamp of the ship, dragged a larger boy up to Dick and said: —

"Lick my brother for me, Dixie. He's too

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fresh. Lick him, and I'll be your clerk and cut the notches. Dick's got a stick full o' notches." And Dick, putting on his shirt, smiled, but said nothing.

The defeated one painfully arose to his feet and the crowd pushed them together. Dick extended his hand.

"It's all right, Halpin," said the other as he took it. "You've done me up fair and square; and I knew you were workin' up to it — knew it four years ago."

"No, Billson, you're wrong. I'm working up, yes; but not for you. I never held a grudge against any one in the navy — or against any one who'd fight fair. I only thought you and I ought to have it out."

"It's all right, Dick; I guess you're best man aboard now."

"Best man," laughed Dick; "Bronson could shut his hand on the pair of us."

The crowd was dispersing, and Dick descended to the gun-deck where he belonged, while Billson sought the galley and the cook's ministrations toward the improving of his damaged countenance. Fighting, though against the written and spoken rules of the service, is generally winked at in a ship holding five hundred men and boys, the officers feeling that it is much better for two who disagree to go through a short, sharp, and decisive

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appeal to fists — at the end of which both may shake hands — than for one to develop a bullying spirit and the other an unneeded sense of injury. Both are inimical to their efficiency. But though Billson had fought this battle with an animus born of dislike and jealousy, Dick, on the contrary, had entered it with a joke on his lips and a laugh on his face.

There was a settled, cheerful light in his gray eyes that had not been there in his school-days, as though he felt kindly toward the small world he was conquering. As Bronson had testified, his first days in the training-ship were grievous ones — marked by cuffs, kicks, and insults from boys he could pick up and carry — until he had learned to defend himself. Then came a hard-fought battle with an Irish maintopman, and victory which made the next enemy easier to face. For six months after this, until his transfer to the Newport Torpedo Station, his dog-watches were spent either in boxing practice in the forehold, or in settling disputes of the day on the forecastle.

He had easily passed the final examination in the ship's school when he enlisted, but this did not deprive him of his love of books or of his studious habits. He became almost a daily patron of the ship's library, and in the only compulsory studies, seamanship and gunnery, he advanced rapidly, tutored by his friend and guardian, Bron-

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son. He had boxed the compass in one lesson, had stationed a gun-crew in two, and had learned the parts of the ship and the knots and hitches used in lashing hammocks and housing awnings in a week. He also learned things not prescribed by the regulations, such as the tricks necessary in the navy to escape unpleasant duty. The difference between the apothecary's clerk and the executive officer, and the minimum of respect which would satisfy the latter, he had learned in one harrowing interview. But at the end of a month he applied for examination, and became a second-class apprentice with a new bag and hammock-number, which transferred him from the after guard to the maintop.

His friction with his mates reacted on his mind, giving him, as he acquired dominion over them, an easy confidence in himself, and decision of speech which brought him local promotion,— he was made boy-captain of the maintop. And Dick's rule over the half-hundred boys in the maintop was kindly, yet thorough. He never reported for punishment a boy who refused obedience to an order; he repeated the order to a second boy, and later on used the first in his fist practice. But he had little trouble of this kind; his wonderful quickness of motion and growing proficiency with his fists impressed the whole ship's company, and made the majority his

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friends. Boys liked the genial, composed fellow who would hit them hard with a smile on his face, hit them harder through the consequent fight, and smilingly advise them on their weak points when he had defeated them. There was one boy, however, with whom Dick did not, during his probationary period, come to satisfactory conclusions. This was Billson, an apprentice, then captain of the forecastle, who, on Dick's bewildering first day on board, had chased him aft with clouts and unkind words. He was the champion boxer among the boys, and Dick had wisely avoided a second meeting until sure of himself; but before this, had come his transfer to the Newport Torpedo Station for further instruction in torpedo work and rifled gun practice, and Billson's transfer to a sea-going cruiser. Six months at Newport made Dick a first-class apprentice, and he was sent to the *Alliance*, sloop-of-war, in which he made a cruise and mastered the sea duties of a sailor in a square-rigged vessel — steering, handling of sail, sending yards and masts up and down, and the usual boat, fire, and collision drill. Then a year in the big steel cruiser *Chicago* and another in the new battleship *Maine* had finished him, and he was back to the receiving-ship *Vermont*, a passed-seaman apprentice, trained and paid by the government to fight, and to use as weapons fists, clubs, cutlasses, pistols, rifles, machine guns,

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rapid-fire guns, turret guns, and Whitehead torpedoes. And here he had found old shipmates of four years ago, among them Bronson and Billson, and had polished off the latter at the instigation of the former, who loved the boy as he would a son, and whose mind retained a vivid picture — painted by Dick — of a scene on a ball-ground, where his boy had been kicked about by five others. Bronson often talked of this scene at the petty officers' mess, and hoped fervently that it should be given him to be on hand when that boy returned and met the five. It was to this end that he had arranged for Dick's training in the first days, and had now egged him on to try conclusions with the skilled Billson as a last test of his prowess.

Dick was not revengeful. The bitterness of his last days at home had long left his mind, but the punishment of those boys had been so thoroughly impressed on his mind as a duty he owed to himself and his calling, that he looked forward to it with the same expectant equanimity that he would toward a coming fight on the forecastle, or a transfer to another ship.

As for George Arthur, his fate and punishment, in Bronson's mind, were so clearly a matter for Providence to attend to, that he was seldom thought of.

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CHAPTER XI

DICK had no sooner reached the lower gun-deck after the fight with Billson than the stentorian voice of the chief boatswain's mate came down the hatchway: "Halpin, Halpin — pass the word for seaman Halpin to report to the officer of the deck."

The cry was taken up and repeated, echoing forward and aft on three decks; before it had ceased Dick was touching his cap to Mr. Breen.

"You have been fighting, sir," said the officer, assuming a stern expression of face.

"Yes, sir."

"I hear that you are the most quarrelsome character on board — that you are continually fighting and abusing your shipmates."

"I didn't know that, sir," said Dick, soberly.

"You began when you enlisted, I have heard, to thrash every boy weaker than yourself."

"No, sir, I did not. They thrashed me — all who wanted to. It's very easy to get into a row, sir."

"And since then you've thrashed them, is that it?"

Dick noticed a quiver at the corners of Mr.

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Breen's mouth, and answered boldly, "I just finished the last of that crowd, sir; we had words this morning over brass work."

The officer hummed a tune softly while he studied the brown back of Bronson, busily engaged in looking unconcerned, yet taking in every word.

"Where is your home, Halpin?" he asked, after a searching look into Dick's face.

"I have none, sir; I came from Allville, up near the state line."

"Allville," repeated the officer, half to himself. "Do you know — well, never mind. Halpin," he said earnestly, "quit this fighting. It works against you in the long run. I've noticed you around the decks and have heard good reports of you from the officers of the *Maine*. I want you for a shipmate. Say nothing to the men, but the *New York* will want a draft soon. I shall go in her and may be able to have you placed."

"The *New York* — thank you, sir. I hear it's the Mediterranean."

"Either that or the South Pacific; but it's a desirable berth."

"How long before the draft, sir?"

"A couple of weeks."

"Then I'd better apply for my liberty at once, sir. I'm entitled to a week."

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"Go ahead — and be good."

Dick saluted, and returned to the gun-deck with a very high opinion of Mr. Breen. After supper, when Bronson was off duty, he sought him, and they had a conversation which so affected the big quartermaster that he applied for liberty in the morning and went ashore. When he returned, forty-eight hours later, he was accompanied by two marines from the gate guard, who steered him to the officer of the deck, and reported his misconduct, — entering the yard intoxicated, blowing smoke in their faces, bumping the sergeant's head against a stone wall, and using language disrespectful to the Marine Corps and unbecoming a petty officer of the navy. For which Bronson, though extremely repentant, had his shore leave stopped for a month.

"And I can't go along, Dick," he groaned. "I can only give my blessing."

And not only his blessing, but sound advice and superintendence did he give, to the result that Dick, who would have journeyed home alone, was induced to take with him an appreciative and enthusiastic squad of youngsters. "Not to stick your oars in," Bronson enjoined upon them, "or to stand in his way; it's his funeral. You're a guard of honour — you're to prevent more than three jumping on him at once." And so, when a liberty crowd of a hundred men and boys marched

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out of the navy yard a few mornings later, twelve of them waited with Dick outside until the rest had scattered into adjoining streets, then boarding a bridge car, and arriving at the New York side, took the elevated road uptown to the Grand Central Station, where Dick bought excursion tickets for all, and handed them around. They were on three days' liberty. They had been carefully selected on their records from a hundred eager applicants by the discriminating Bronson. They were devoted to Dick, and each felt a respect for himself and his calling based on his training in the service, and a chronic sense of injury which came only of his parentage; for all but Dick were Irish-born, — mulligans, they were called, — and Dick himself inherited red hair, which is conducive to latent pugnacity, at least.

Truly Bronson had chosen wisely. There were Casey, Sullivan, O'Toole, and Devlin, shipmates of Dick on the *Maine;* Shannon and Doyle from the *Atlanta;* Billson, whose first name was Dennis, from the *Chicago;* and Webster, Scanlon, Killroy, Keegan, and Kerrigan from the *Miantonomah.* All wore the cap ribbons of their last ships; all were in shirt sleeves, — for, the weather being fine, the uniform of the day had not included pea-coats, — and all, except Dick, who paid car fare and expenses, were penniless, and for this reason had not been off the Cob-dock for months. Thirteen

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bronzed, active, muscular young sailors on liberty — thirteen unleashed terriers — were invading a quiet country town.

At the station, while waiting for the train, Dick had his first misgivings. Kerrigan would borrow a dollar of him and treat the crowd, and being denied the pleasure, threatened to "shake him," and only changed his mind when he was sternly directed by Dick to "clear out." Then Dick delivered a short lecture in the station on the wisdom of temperance, and advised those who would not take orders from him and submit to his management of the job, to stay behind. He would much rather go home alone, he said, as he left town with a good reputation, and was a little ashamed of the company he was now in. This, with Dick's known superior education and habitual correctness of speech, impressed them. They reproved Kerrigan, and vowing good conduct and obedience, passed through the gate and boarded the train, which, at one o'clock in the afternoon, landed them at Allville.

The first thing, of course, was something to eat, and Dick marshalled them across the street and into the dining room of what had been the Allville House, but now, with a new coat of paint and larger sign and barroom, was the Hotel Morrisey. "Dinner for thirteen," he ordered of a waiter

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as they seated themselves, "and bring me the bill in advance."

"Now, boys," he said, as he pocketed the change, "I shall hurry through and find the lay of the land, while you wait here. Understand me — no drinking; you've got no money, but you might be treated. Take cigars."

They said they would. Dick bolted his dinner and hurried out, passing in the door a red-faced man in an alpaca coat and immaculate shirt-front. This man looked after him as though he would have spoken, then, spying the party at the table, bounded toward them.

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CHAPTER XII

DICK passed into the business street of the town, where familiar faces peered at him. But none recognized in the bare-throated, sunburned sailor, swinging along with a man's vigorous stride, the under-sized, freckled schoolboy who had disappeared under a cloud. On his part, he did not care to make himself known. There were changes, — a trolley line had been established, and new buildings replaced some that he remembered. The town had become a city; a new city hall arose from the park, with a police station on the lower floor; a bright-fronted theatre faced the park on a side street, and next it was a Salvation Army barracks, while a red brick building, with blue-shirted men lounging in the open doorway, through which could be seen a fire engine and hose-cart, testified further to the prosperity of the town. These changes pained him. It was no home-coming to Dick; he had loved the scenes of his boyhood.

"Ought to see Aunt Mollie first," he mused, as he reached the resident portion; "but I won't — not till evening. She'd keep me too long. Here's Bessie's street — if she still lives there."

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He was in a side street, and soon reached one of a row of Queen Anne cottages — the kind which dominates all others in the suburbs of American cities. There was a brighter, more cared-for look to all of them than there had been, and especially did the one before him indicate the prosperity of its owner. The fence had been removed, flower beds had been laid out on the lawns, showing here and there with the dead grass through shallow snow-banks, while from within came the sound of piano music — improvised chords in minor.

"Bessie had no piano," he said; "but she liked music. Wonder if the old man's made his pile. I'll see."

He mounted the steps, opened the door of a storm-house, and touched a button inside. "Electric bells," he muttered.

The music ceased and was followed by the patter of light feet; then the door swung open and a young lady was facing him — a fluffy-haired creature with pink-and-white cheeks, who looked at him with wide-open, surprised eyes.

"Hello, Bessie," he said cheerily; "how are you? I've come — why, Bessie, don't you know me?"

"I — really —" she began doubtfully, while she drew back into the hallway, "I — why, Dick — Dick Halpin — where did you come from?"

She advanced with a smile of genuine welcome

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in her face, and extended her hand. Then she invited him in and seated him in a corner of the parlour and herself in another, where she studied his face, with a half-smiling, half-nervous expectancy on her own.

"Anna is at school to-day," she said at last, "and mamma is down town. They'll be home soon; they'll be glad to see you."

"All right. Now, Bessie, tell me the news. What's happened? Going to school yet?"

"Yes," she answered demurely. "But I'm home to-day because I expect — I expected company. Your class graduates in a few days, and they will have their commencement exercises in the new theatre."

"Entertainment — oratory — singing — and all that?"

"Yes, and Will Simpson, you know — you remember him — is valedictorian."

"He is, eh — um-humph. Where's Tom Allen now, Bessie? At school?"

"Yes; he graduates too."

"Tom Brandes and Ned Brown?"

"Graduates. But why, what's the matter with them?"

"One more, Bessie, please. Where's Pig Jones?"

"Ran away from home, and nobody knows where he went."

"Good — thank you, Bessie. You're a brick —

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you're a full-powered newspaper — and, oh, by the way, where's young Arthur?"

"Didn't you hear? He went to the Naval Academy over three years ago. He was sent to a preparatory school just after you left."

Dick whistled softly.

"And some time I'll have to take orders from that," he muttered.

"I'm really grateful, Bessie," he continued seriously as he arose to go. "I came only on business, and you've helped me tremendously."

"You came on business," she queried, "and have catechised me as you pleased, but you've told me nothing of yourself. Where have you been all these years? Did you bring any message?"

"Message — no, Bessie, who from? I wanted to see you."

Without knowing why, Dick saw that she was immensely relieved; she smilingly invited him to sit down again.

"I'm in a hurry now, Bessie," he answered. "But I'll call again this evening."

"I haven't invited you to call this evening." His face straightened a little. She saw it and said gently, "You see I have an engagement."

"Oh, all right; I'll hunt another sweetheart."

"Yes; then try Mabel again," she said sweetly. "She's a lovely girl now. Nothing like what she was when — when she wasn't worth powder to blow her up."

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CHAPTER XIII

DICK'S faced flamed. He had resolutely put Mabel from his mind, and even the mention and thought of her brother bore no relation to the memory he cherished of his boyish regard for her. He would not have spoken of her; but Bessie had broken his guard, and with the sound of her name came an eager desire to hear of her, which contrasted painfully with his humiliation; for how could Bessie quote from his letter if it had not become public property?

"So she showed you that, did she?" he said at last.

"No, she did not," said Bessie from the depths of a sofa, where she had collapsed in her laughter. "But as my most intimate friend, she quoted to me your opinion of her. Oh, 'I loved you, and you are not worth powder to blow you up.'" And Bessie was again overcome.

"Well, have it out with yourself, Bessie," he said painfully; "and then tell me. How is she? I haven't heard of her since I left."

Bessie arose and laughed no more. His face forbade it; but she was still woman enough to tease him.

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"She is very well, I believe, and at home now. I may see her to-morrow. Would you like to send a message by me? No? Well, I shall say that I've seen you, anyway. She would be delighted to meet you again, I know.

"Of course," the girl went on with feminine maliciousness, "Mabel is enormously popular. She came out last year, and she has lawyers, doctors, literary men, artists, well — all kinds of men, in her train, with a few millionaires thrown in."

"And she," he began awkwardly.

"She — well," purred Bessie, "there is Mr. Breen, of the navy — have you met him?"

"Breen — Ensign Breen?" repeated Dick.

"Yes, Ensign Breen. She met him before her début, and his chance should be good. He is a sailor. Her first love letter came from a sailor, and he will get the reflected benefit."

For the purpose of further tormenting him, Bessie had said too much. Dick knew the pay and marriage value of an ensign, aside from the element of love, which would have reached a definite point in less than two seasons. This had flashed through his brain without process of reason. But what hardened him was the following thought — that of the vast social gulf between himself and the ensign, between a sailor before the mast and a commissioned officer.

"Bessie," he said with a mock courtesy and

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recklessness born of his conflicting emotions, "were I worthy, I should extend through you my congratulations to Miss Arthur on her conquest. Were I in a position to advise, I should caution her to beware of naval officers — especially ensigns. They do not earn as much as the ship's cook, and their wives take in washing to clothe them."

"Why, you cannot mean it," said the astonished girl. "Mr. Breen is an ensign, and I know — "

"Ensign Breen," said Dick with fine anarchistic scorn. "Ensign Breen, of the *Vermont*. Why, Breen killed a Kanaka woman with hasheesh in the Straits of Sunda last cruise but one. Got a wife in 'Fr'isco, two in Antwerp, and a whole harem in the Sandwich Islands. Got knifed in Rio for running a dual establishment; and he pays alimony in four towns on this coast, and — "

"I don't believe a single word you say."

She had grown an inch taller. Her eyes were snapping and her finger-nails were buried in the palms of her hands, while her cheeks, but for two little red spots which came and went, were white.

"Fact, Bessie — why, what's the matter?"

She threw herself on the sofa and buried her face in the pillow.

"What's the trouble, Bessie?" he asked. Then, dimly realizing the truth, he began to explain.

"I was only joking; it was all a string of lies.

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Didn't think what I was saying, Bessie — honest. Don't cry any more, now. I'm sorry. I wouldn't make you cry for anything. Mr. Breen's a good fellow — one of the best. He's my officer."

"There must be something," she sobbed; "you would not dare say such things unless you knew."

"You mean that where there's smoke there's fire, Bessie? It's all smoke, every bit. You stirred me up, and I didn't care what I said."

She sat up and dried her eyes, while he sang the praises of Ensign Breen, ascribing virtues to him that would have astonished the young officer had he heard. But Dick, with a sore heart of his own, felt a large and generous sympathy for other aching hearts, and an especial interest in Bessie, his only friend in the old trouble, who evidently loved this man. She listened quietly — eagerly — and at last smilingly.

"I must go, Bessie," he said, when he felt that he had undone the harm of his thoughtless words. "Mr. Breen and I will go out in the *New York*. If you like, I'll write you occasionally, and give you the news. Will you answer a letter now and then?"

"Why, of course," said the subdued girl; "I shall be glad to hear from you and glad to write to you." And perhaps each knew, without further compact, the kind of news expected of the

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other. Dick secured his cap and they stepped into the hall.

"Promise me," she said, as she opened the inner door for him, "that you will not speak of — this — to Mabel, or — to Mr. Breen."

"Of course I won't, Bessie. Officers don't exchange confidences with blue-jackets, and as for the other — we're not acquainted. Good-by, Bessie; I'll write."

"Good-by, Dick."

Her pretty face, with its pleading look not yet supplanted by the coming smile, was close to him. Obeying an impulse, he suddenly passed his arm around her waist.

"Don't, please don't!" she cried as she endeavoured to escape; then, helpless in his strong grasp, she remained passive, while he kissed her. When he looked up he stared into the startled face of Ensign Breen, who, in citizen's clothes — high hat, silk-faced top-coat, and all — was standing in the outer door. Dick confusedly knuckled his forehead, — his cap was on the floor, — but the officer ignored him.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Fleming," said Mr. Breen as he lifted his hat, "but the bell was inside, and I opened the outer door. I am very sorry. Good afternoon."

He turned and was gone before she could reply. Bessie sank into a hall chair.

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"Here's a pretty mess," muttered Dick. "Bessie, I'm sorry, honest, I am; who would have thought he'd have shown up?"

"I," she said, rising and pointing to the door. "I expected him. You do not know the harm you have done. Go, and do not come back. Do not write to me or ever speak to me again. I hate you."

"Well, all right," he answered humbly, picking up his cap; "I'm sorry, Bessie — that's all I can say."

But she had entered the parlour. He opened the door and passed out, with an opinion of himself that he had never held before. Down the street, just turning the corner, was Mr. Breen, stepping briskly along with the erect, graceful carriage that, somehow, is never acquired but at Annapolis and on American quarter-decks.

"Going around to call on her, I'll bet," he growled.

Humiliated and self-reproachful, burning with jealous curiosity, his moral fibre somewhat weakened, he did what at other times he would not have done. He followed the ensign and saw him mount the steps of the large house he remembered so well. Then, in a mood which unfitted him for even his own company, he went down to the hotel.

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CHAPTER XIV

DICK found his men in the barroom, noisy and talkative, surrounded by an admiring crowd of villagers. One glance told him the situation.

"Hooray here, Dick, me lad," called the red-faced man behind the bar. "I know ye by reputation. Yer Ned Bronson's best lad, and I'm his best friend. Step up here, Dick, and have one wid me."

"Thank you," said Dick, savagely; "I'm not drinking;" and then, to the others, "I don't need you — not a blasted one of you. Breen's in town — I've just seen him. Do you want to go in the brig?"

"It's all right, Dick," they protested. "We had just one apiece. That hurts no one. This is Morrisey's place —"

"As many as can toe a line," interrupted Dick, "I'll use — no more. Fall in."

They formed a line, every pair of toes just touching a crack in the floor.

"Count fours," called Dick. "One," said the first; the next called two, the next three, the next four; then they began at one, until the groups of fours were numbered.

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"Twos right — march!" he called, and as they formed double column and marched through the door, Morrisey whooped and ran for his coat and hat. Dick saw, by the clock over the new city hall, that he had fifteen minutes to spare before the closing bell of the school would ring, and as this time was ample, he marched his guard by roundabout streets, so as to avoid a possible meeting with Mr. Breen. It was a new spectacle in the town, and soon the sidewalks on both sides in the rear were crowded with a growing throng of boys and a few men and girls. Over the heads of those just behind the parade loomed the stovepipe hat and joyful red face of Morrisey. Dick, sullenly conscious of the interest they had aroused, muttered: "Might as well have brought a brass band as this gang; but I'll carry it through if we have to clean up the town."

On the next street was the school. Dick wheeled them around the corner, halting them in open order, a file on each side, with himself at the head. Opposite was the ball-ground; he could see the tree under which he had been mobbed; and across the years of his wandering at sea came to his mind in all its early force the wrong and the rage of that last day, softened only by the warm-heartedness of Bessie. Not even his regret for his treatment of her now availed to stem or relieve the overflow of latent fury which the

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scenes of his humiliation and disgrace set free. He wished that Mr. Clark, who had branded him as a thief, would come out and interfere. He wished that George Arthur could be there, to receive his undivided attention for only a minute, and — yes, that his sister, who believed him a thief, could be there to witness. And as for the townspeople behind, if they interfered — well, he had twelve "mulligans" to attend to them.

The bell in the cupola above clanged its dozen strokes and ceased. Then the same old janitor of four years back emerged from the basement stairs at the side and threw open the doors of the girls' entrance. With a curious glance at the two lines of blue, he passed along and opened the entrance for the boys. In a few minutes, laughing, shouting youngsters of both sexes — the junior department — emerged and hovered near the sailors, curiosity silencing their noise. Next came the senior department, boys of between thirteen and sixteen, and pretty, graceful girls, most of whom Dick remembered as "young uns" in knickerbockers and short dresses. They passed through and around the waiting blue-jackets with curiosity scarcely less than that of the juniors, and halted with the spectators beyond. Then appeared the high school scholars — ladylike young girls and well-dressed young men, who paired off, here and there, and stepped briskly down toward the gaunt-

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let. They were closely scrutinized by Dick as they passed, but none recognized in the young man at the head of the lines the schoolmate of the past. It was for him to make himself known. He placed himself before a heavily-built young gentleman, in gloves and buttoned overcoat, whose full mustache had almost disguised him.

"Stop," he said in a voice that was almost a snarl. "You're Tom Allen, aren't you? Yes — Tom Allen. Know me? No? You don't know me. I'm the thief and the telltale. I'm Dick Halpin. I'm here to repeat what I told you once before — over there on the ball-ground. Tom Allen, you — are — a — liar."

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CHAPTER XV

"WHA—what? Eh. Hello, Dick. Didn't know you. When d'you get back?" said Tom, too surprised to comprehend Dick's attitude.

"That's not the question," answered Dick. He stooped and picked up a sliver of wood from the sidewalk, which he balanced on Tom's shoulder. Then he knocked it off, and as Tom smiled weakly and placidly at the declaration of war, he struck him in the face. Tom understood; his lip was cut and his nose bleeding.

"Let me alone," he whined, but Dick sprang behind him, struck out again with all his strength, and Tom staggered toward the line of blue-jackets.

"Pass him through," called Dick; "he's had enough."

With yells and laughter they passed him through. Tom, in a state of unstable equilibrium, chasséd down the line, kept from falling by the alternate blows he received from each side. Before he had received the last and floundered to the sidewalk beyond, Dick, realizing the magnitude of the task he had set for himself, bounded toward the waiting group at the gate.

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Confronting him was the stern-faced Mr. Clark, his old teacher.

"Is this you, Richard Halpin?" he said menacingly. "Stop this at once, or I shall send for the police."

"Yes, Mr. Clark," answered Dick; "and as you're too old for me, I advise you to keep out. I've started to lick the gang that licked me, and I'll do it, too. And if you call your police, they'll get hurt — that's all."

"He won't lick me," said a tall, broad-shouldered and well-dressed young man, who stepped to Mr. Clark's side. It was Will Simpson, the boy who, at sixteen, had thrashed a man; and he was removing his outer garments. Dick, with wide-open eyes, waited until he had hung them over the fence, then asked, "Ready?"

"Yes — ready; always ready," answered Will, dryly and composedly, bringing his two big fists to position.

But before they were quite in position — almost before the last word had left his lips — Dick had planted both fists between his eyes. Will staggered against the fence, recovered and advanced angrily. But the strength and skill that had made him a village champion were of no avail before Dick Halpin — a seaman apprentice of the navy. Shameful and bitter before his schoolmates was his punishment, as Dick, unhurt by his

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lunging strokes, danced around him, and at last, when he made a wild rush, sent him to earth.

"Any more?" cried Dick, in an abandon of recklessness. "Webster — Scanlon. Here — take care of this one in case he wants more."

These two advanced, lifted the demoralized Will Simpson to his feet and escorted him to the ranks. Dick, with flashing eyes and dilating nostrils, the battle-fever in his soul, pushed through the scattering, agitated group at the gate and caromed into a white-haired old gentleman whom he knew as the high school principal, but who had no knowledge, past or present, of Dick.

"Stand clear, sir," he cried to the shocked old gentleman; "I'm reforming your school." He brushed past him. "Ned Brown, Tom Brandes," he muttered. "Are they here?"

Up the street, toward the country road, was a group — scholars of both sexes, and among them, as he looked, Dick recognized the faces of the two he had named — tall young fellows who had the appearance of being able to run. He could catch one, but not the other. Turning the other way he beheld Mr. Clark and the high school principal hurrying past his shipmates. An indignant crowd surrounded the sailors, and down the street — two blocks away — were three policemen, with drawn clubs, coming on a run. Dick grasped the situation at a glance. "Devlin — Kerrigan," he

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called, "come here. Look out for the cops behind you, boys. Clear out. Turn those fellows loose and muster at the station at six."

Devlin and Kerrigan arrived. They were joyful of soul, and possessed, besides, the additional qualification of good records in the Cob-dock footraces.

"Boys," said Dick, as he pointed up the street, "see that long-geared fellow in the derby hat and short overcoat, near the tree? That's Ned Brown. Get him. He'll run, but get him. If he wants to see me, bring him to that tree over there. If he don't, tap him once for me and meet us at the station — six o'clock. Understand? No mistake, now. I'll get my man, and that'll finish up. Hurrah, now. Come on."

Away they went on a keen run, and the boys ahead of them scattered. Dick had chosen Tom Brandes, who waited for him behind a tree across the street, then, dodging as he was about to seize him, sped diagonally across the ball-ground toward the side streets and his home. He was speedy, and Dick settled down to a long chase.

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CHAPTER XVI

"YOU have met him? Where? What is he like? Is he doing well? You have been here two hours and only just tell me."

"He is doing very well," said Mr. Breen, dryly; "very well indeed. And not the least in retaining your interest so long. Let's see; how many years have sadly flown?"

"Please be serious," Mabel Arthur answered, with a hint of colour in her face; "I ought to explain. I feel responsible for his leaving home and school. We were only children, of course. He left under a cloud, and Bessie has always said that if he went to the bad it would be my fault."

In any face but that of Ensign John Breen, the expression might have been a sneer; in his it was but a lukewarm smile.

"And Bessie is interested?" he asked.

"Of course; why, she believed in him when I did not. Later, it all came out. He was accused, unjustly, of stealing, and expelled from school. His uncle turned him out, and he went away. I have never heard from him since. I hope he is successful."

"He is. He is a seaman-gunner of the navy,

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now in the *Vermont* with me. He is one of the finest products of the apprentice system that I've seen — tall, athletic, refined in speech — educated, I'm told, almost to the requirements of a commission — handsome in a way, and a favourite with all hands — and the ladies."

"I'm so glad; and where is he now — in Vermont, did you say?"

"On board the receiving-ship *Vermont;* but in town to-day."

"In town? Here — in Allville?"

"I saw him two minutes before I called. He must have come up on the train ahead of me."

"Why didn't you bring him with you? You know I would like to see him."

"You forget that it is two years or more since you expressed the desire; besides, I doubt that a sailor would care to make social visits with an officer."

"I understand the sarcasm; but I do want to see him. Where was he?"

"He was very pleasantly occupied. Had I been enjoying myself so thoroughly, I would hardly have come on the instant — even had you sent for me."

She looked searchingly at him, with inquiry in her face; and, after a moment's musing, she said, "But do you think you could induce him to —"

"You would have me hunt him up, and extend

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your invitation? I will do so, provided he is on the street." He arose as he spoke, and the lines of his face hardened a little.

"No, no, I was thoughtless. You are an officer — he is a sailor."

"I am not in uniform."

"No — sit down again. It would grate and harrow your very soul. Men may forgive anything but a humiliation. I will write to him."

"I should think," he said dryly, as he seated himself, "that a letter would answer every purpose."

"Sometimes I hate myself," she said slowly, as she studied the carpet. "Do you know what I did? When he was disgraced and expelled? He stood outside when school let out, and he looked as if he had not a friend in the world; and every immaculate one of us snubbed him — except Bessie. I shall never forget the look in his face when I passed him." There were decided tears in her eyes now, and all that Mr. Breen could say, in a rather strained accent of voice, was, "Bessie has a good heart — a big, generous heart."

"Indeed she has. And she was so indignant when she learned it all. It was a year later, for I went away to boarding-school, and we did not become friends until I got back. Neither of us knew at the time all that had happened. Why, there were five boys, all larger than he, who set

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upon him, and kicked him almost unconscious; and he was brave, and fought them; but there were so many — the great — big — brutes. Poor little Dick!"

"Poor little Dick," repeated the ensign. "Poor, big, broad-shouldered, iron-fisted, quicker-than-chain-lightning, able-seaman Halpin. I wouldn't care to be one of the five when he meets them. The other day, I was told, he lifted Big Billson — two hundred pounds — right off his feet with one blow. He's a terror, poor little Dick."

She turned her face to the window, as if to hide the inconsistent smile that was showing there. Then, with an exclamation she arose to her feet.

"Look! look!" she said.

Mr. Breen reached her side at a bound. A wild-eyed youth with his hat in his hand had rushed around the corner of the house from the back yard, pursued by another, who caught him at the foot of the front steps.

"There," said the ensign, "there is your poor little boy; and he seems to be upholding his later record."

"Is that Dick Halpin, really? Is that Dick? Oh, isn't he changed? Isn't he a man! But what is he doing?"

She looked with startled eyes at the pair outside. They were both panting, and one cringed

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before the other, who stood erect, holding him by the collar. Their voices could be plainly heard —one quavering with fear, the other angry and strong.

"You're not worth it, Tom Brandes," Dick was saying; "but to finish the job, you've got to take it." Tom lowered his head, but the fist did not fall. Dick's face had assumed a wondering, puzzled look as he glanced up and down the street, and it changed to one of certainty when his eyes rested on the front of the house and the two figures in the window. His grip loosened on Tom's collar; the young man shook himself free, and fled through the gate, while Dick, with his flushed face a shade redder, and an almost defiant light in his eyes, drew himself to full height and brought his hand to his cap in a stiff salute. Then he turned, passed through the gate, following Tom down the street at a walk. The ensign had answered the salute, but Mabel had inclined her head and smiled before it was given.

"Was that one of the five?" asked the ensign, cautiously. She had left the window and seated herself in a chair.

"Yes; I know them all."

"Let me try to explain," he said gently; "he might have removed his cap, of course, to a lady; but I think he was embarrassed, and on the spur of the moment answered with the service salute."

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"He saluted you; he would not look at me. I deserve it, I know; but I would have explained — I would have apologized. It was due him. Now, how can I?"

"Explain through Bessie — whatever it is. They must be very good friends. He visited there to-day. I saw him — on my way here."

"At her house," she exclaimed, standing erect; "then that is why — what she meant — she expected company — she could not come over to-day."

As an officer and a gentleman must not tell all he knows, Mr. Breen may be excused in not naming himself as the company expected. It might have involved explanations of the shortness of his stay.

"She must have known all about him — all this long time," she continued, as she paced the floor. "It is the deceit — the deceit that hurts. She was always talking about him. And she never told me. I could not deceive her so. Explain through her? Not I. But — I am a woman now, and it is due myself to atone for the selfish fault of a child — in the only way that is left me. You see him often. Will you say to him — "

"Pardon me," he interrupted. "No, I cannot. I can have nothing but official relations with him. Oh, I would like to be a blue-jacket," he burst out

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vehemently, "a nice sailor-boy, with a big fist and a big nerve and an interesting past."

"Mr. Breen, what do you mean?" she said slowly.

"I beg your pardon — really, I do," he said, while his face softened. "I ought not to have spoken so, but, you see, I never before knew a sailor so far above par. I believe I'll go; and not come again until I am on better terms with myself — that is, if I may."

"You will stay right here and have dinner with us. Father will be home in a few minutes. No, you must stay — I insist. If you like you may take me to the theatre this evening. I have tickets."

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CHAPTER XVII

THE contractions of facial muscles known as smiles, grins, sneers, and frowns are prompted by emotions varying from those of pleasure to those of pain and anger. Other changes of feature, such as result from surprise, grief, or fear, though equally distinctive, have not been denominated. A few of them are duplicated in the faces of animals, but often from a contradictory cause. A dog and a hyena will grin, and the latter will laugh, but not from a sense of humour; and these apparent inconsistencies and accidental variations in cause and effect have prevented science from classifying the relations between the emotions and the muscles as an exact study. In spite of this difficulty, however, one iconoclastic reasoner has attempted to trace the origin of the smile — which alone in the list may be considered a human attribute — by a backward flight to the days when our ancestors hung by their tails to the limbs of trees and were as dexterous with their toes as with their fingers, when the first law of Nature was in supreme force, and the struggle for existence so bitter as to exclude all pleasure except that of eating — when, other things being equal, the indi-

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vidual who first got his or her mouth open was the one to close it on food. Hence, says this reasoner, arose the habit of opening the mouth in good time; and the habit, coincident in performance with pleasure or its anticipation, has descended through the ages, and has produced, through evolution, the smile.

Think of this, young mother. Your baby, dimpling under your caresses, receives the impulse from a tailed and hairy ancestor, ravenously parting two rows of yellow tushes in hungry anticipation. Young man, as you bask in the radiant joy and tenderness beaming through the beauty in your sweetheart's face, remember that her smile is an ancestral trait based upon the empty stomachs of her progenitors. Girls, trust him not because he merely smiles. The founders of his family raced and fought for food, and survived the struggle because their mouths were large and their jaws strong. That is why he is here to-day, to feel pleasure in your favour, and fondly smile upon you.

The iconoclastic reasoner may escape a violent death, but he deserves to linger on in a loveless, smileless existence. For, with his logic, he would rob us of the sweetest favour of the gods, humanity's universal flag-of-truce — welcome index of needful, though temporary, armistice in the never ending warfare of individuals. He would take

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away the entrancing mystery of the dearest, most delightful of all life's delusions, — the smile of woman, — which, even though we know that it is often a masked battery, we would not do without. It can bless us or blight us, but we are free agents with power of volition. We may accept or reject, risk or run; and woman's radiant smile, like other radiant energy, decreases in force as the square of the distance.

Mabel Arthur had again smiled at Dick, and the effect was revolutionary. In his hard masculine life the affections had not been largely developed. A warm and sincere friendship between himself and Bronson had found expression only in an absence of harsh words in their intercourse, a careless nod or cheery joke at parting, and a hearty handshake when they met again. Toward Bessie there had remained a kindly feeling of gratitude, which had led him to seek her — for further favours — on coming home. His weak-natured aunt had never been able to impress him strongly, and he stood now, as in his childhood, nearly alone in the world. It was due, perhaps, to this lack of diverting affections that the boyish admiration and homage inspired by Mabel, as a school miss, had grown latently as he approached manhood, into a feeling of intensity past his own power of analysis. He was dimly conscious of its growth and grip on his soul when Bessie had teased him,

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and later had awakened more fully to a conception of its strength when he had seen his officer making for her door. Yet his consequent ill-humour on this occasion arose from a jealousy which he might have classed with the feeling often aroused in him when he had looked through a skylight at the ward-room dinner and had then gone forward to a salt-beef ration. But the sight of her, standing at the window in all her beauty of figure and face, — the startled dark eyes shining with the tears of the moment before, the crown of glossy hair, the tinted cheek and full white throat, the graceful inclining of her head and shoulders, and the tremulous, tentative parting of her lips that ripened, as he looked, to a bewildering smile of frank recognition, — aroused in the sailor a knowledge of himself.

But the knowledge came with a shock, and his involuntary attitude partook of the bitter defiance of his last meeting with her. He had not seen the change in her face which had prompted Mr. Breen to a chivalrous defence of his ungraciousness, and he went down the street with wildly beating heart and trembling knee-joints, wrestling with the one phase of the situation that he could grasp, — she had smiled on him, and greeted him from the window of her home. For the gentleman at her side — the commissioned officer — he cared nothing at present. Mabel had smiled on

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him, and by that smile had lifted him higher in his self-estimation than would an appointment to Annapolis.

At the next corner he came to earth. He heard distant yells over the house-tops, and the rousing chorus of a sea song that he knew. But that which had come to him prevented the words that would surely have arisen to his lips without it, and yet accentuated the sickening disgust he now felt for the crowd with which he was identified, and for the mission which had brought them to this peaceful town. What would she think of him when it all came out? Yet she herself had once asked him to fight, and there was comfort in the thought.

He could not mix with that crowd now — not yet, — so he doubled around the block and out across the ball-ground, glad to find it vacant, and sat down on a rock at the side of the country road, where he overhauled his soul, calling back the past, planning the future, and often shutting his eyes to see again the face at the window. His time in the navy would expire in a few months; he would be of age, he could obtain the money that his mother had left him, and meet Mabel Arthur by right as the social equal of any ensign in the American navy.

Even a sailor in love, seasoned as he may be against exposure and warmed by the glow in his

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breast, may become chilled if he sits long on a cold rock, especially if the uniform of the day is "blue without pea-coats." Yet the distant city-hall clock had struck seven and the winter cold had reached his bones before he was reminded that at six he was to meet the boys at the station.

"Hope they knew enough to take the train," he muttered as he pulled himself together and started stiffly through the darkness. Under the first street light he studied his time-table and found that the next train for the city would pass through at nine o'clock. "Plenty of time," he said; "it's like pulling teeth to shake hands with the old man; but Aunt Mollie wouldn't forgive me if I missed seeing her."

He went down the street, past the schoolhouse, and, a few blocks further, crossed over to enter the street on which stood his uncle's house. But in the middle of the street he stopped. He could look straight down to the business section of the town, brightly illuminated by the newly installed arc lights overhead. Men were running about and an occasional shout reached his ears. He turned, and hurried on, for he could distinguish, here and there, among the running men, the uniformed figure of a shipmate. Two men coming toward him scurried across the street when they saw him under a street lamp, and Dick heard

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one say, "There's another of 'em." Both looked worse for wear.

He passed groups on the corners, and was stared at and given room. Uncomplimentary remarks and epithets came from crowded doorways, and a woman screamed after him, "Why don't you git out o' this town, you miserable rowdy?" Paying no attention, he hurried on, passing the door of the police station where three middle-aged men in shirt-sleeves and blue trousers with thin white stripes were expostulating with an older and grayer man in the uniform of a police captain. On the next street, where stood the Salvation Army barracks and brightly lighted theatre, was the centre of excitement. Here he found Casey in the middle of the street, swinging an agonized pug dog around by its chain as a sailor would heave the lead, calling out, "Watch, ho, watch," with each revolution of the dog, and as the poor brute landed, "By the mark ten," "A quarter nine," or any mark or deep of the lead-line that came to his mind. The mistress of the dog wept in a doorway, and O'Toole, flourishing a locust club, was threatening Casey with mock arrest and dodging the dog. In front of the barracks were the others, doing their best to break up an outdoor service of the Salvationists. Billson, an expert bugler, had captured a cornet, and Scanlon a drum. The street was crowded with awestruck

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boys, and the sidewalks with well-dressed, respectable folk, most of them bound for the theatre, and some of whom were laughing at the spectacle; but Morrisey, the tutelary genius of it all, was not in evidence.

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CHAPTER XVIII

"HELL to pay and no pitch hot," growled Dick as he faced Casey. "Drop it, Casey," he said, "belay that. Let the dog go."

"Hooray," yelled Casey, obeying the order — the dog landed near its owner — and throwing his arms around Dick's neck. "Here he is. Where ye been, me jewel? Did they kill ye at all?"

"No sound, no ground, no bottom to be found, with the long pitch-pine pike-pole, Daddy," howled Shannon, vaulting between them on the end of a long pole. "Can ye take soundin's on the *Erie*, Casey? This way." He stabbed the pavement. "No sound, no ground — hello, Dick. Here's Dick."

They seized Dick by the shoulders and pushed him, unresisting, over toward the others, while O'Toole prodded them with the club.

"Stop this," he yelled, shaking himself free. "Stop it, or you'll get the worst of it. Come on, now, down to the station — all of you." They paid no attention. Dick retreated to the sidewalk and a dignified old gentleman tapped him on the shoulder. He knew him. It was Mr. Arthur — Mabel's father.

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"You appear to be sober, young man," he said. "If you can control those fellows and induce them to leave town, do so; if not, as mayor of the town, I shall call out the firemen. They can attend to them if the police cannot."

"Excuse me, sir," answered Dick in some embarrassment — for the halo of Mabel's divinity hung over her father; "but if you do, there will only be some heads to mend. I can't control them now — not yet. They're three-sheets-in-the-wind and wouldn't take orders from an admiral. But wait a little and I'll get them away."

"Chief," called the old gentleman to the gray-haired police captain, who stood in the crowd, "call out all the companies and send the foremen to me."

Three minutes later, with a clanging of bells and scattering of boys, two engines, two hose-carts, and two hook-and-ladder trucks clattered up to the corner from different directions, and Dick, expostulating with his shipmates, who were now forming for parade, observed two six-foot foremen, in fire helmets and waterproof coats, hastening toward the mayor. He also joined him.

"Now look here, sir," he said excitedly; "there's no use in this. They'll resent dictation and some one will get hurt if you use force with them. I can keep them from doing any harm. Leave it to me, and I'll march them to the station."

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The mayor regarded him seriously, as though disposed to believe him; but another man, pushing through the crowd, interrupted him just as he was about to speak.

"What's up, Mr. Arthur?" he asked. "Want to sprinkle 'em?"

"Why, yes, Jenkins, I had thought of it — or else, throwing them out of town by force. I called your men, but as chief you are entitled to direct. This young man advises delay — thinks he can manage them."

"Manage nothing," answered the other, regarding Dick contemptuously. "I'll give 'em a bath for the fun of it, and drive 'em afterward."

"Suit yourself, Jenkins."

"All right," said Dick, angrily. "You'll be sorry for it, I promise you. I'll stand by my mates."

He hurried to them where they were regarding with mild interest the preparations for their undoing. They seemed to have forgotten their idea of parade.

"Break — scatter — clear out," yelled Dick; "they're going to turn the water on you."

"Going to what?" they answered in chorus. "Going to turn water on us? Are we afire? Going to wash us? Why not holystone us? Billson, shut off steam, there; silence that fog-horn o' yours. Scanlon, beat to quarters! Repel

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boarders! All hands repel boarders! Keegan, belay. Stand by for a rakin' fire from forrard."

Even as they declaimed the two companies were rushing their engines and hose-carts in opposite directions to the hydrants at the next corners, the carts paying out hose as they went. The hook-and-ladder men remained by their trucks. Two pipe-men at each hose coupled on the heavy brass nozzles, waited until the engines whistled, and sang out in answer. Men passed the word along the two lines and water came — a deluge of it, in two solid streams, which struck the procrastinating blue-jackets and knocked most of them down, while the crowd cheered.

Although a wetting has little effect on the health of a sailor, it invariably adds to his discomfort and combativeness. They arose, much soberer than when they fell, charged on the nearest nozzle and wrested it from the firemen, who fled, followed by the stream, which, first circling overhead, generously soaked the spectators on the sidewalk. Leaving two in charge of the first nozzle, they charged on and captured the second, the pipe-men speeding out of range like the others. Then, while the firemen, who had so far regarded the matter as an enjoyable frolic, were reorganizing with their oncoming reinforcements, — which included the three policemen, — the two streams were turned on the spectators, changing their

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derisive laughter to cries of anger, and practically washing the street clear of them.

But the firemen, dead in earnest now, were coming back, nearly two dozen strong, armed with spanners, hooks, fire-axes, spare nozzles, and trumpets. They had thrown off their cumbersome waterproof coats, and, drenched to the skin, advanced inch by inch against the two streams which the yelling sailors held at their breasts. Then they deployed to the right and left, flanked and disconcerted the moist battery, and advanced more rapidly to what promised to be a bloody conflict, disastrous for the sailors. To add to this promise, there were, coming back from the rear, wet and angry citizens, who had secured sticks and clubs ranging in size from canes to cart-stakes; but, in fact, only one serious conflict occurred.

It was between a sailor and two big hook-and-ladder men, who had advanced with fire-hooks, the long points and barbs of which make them as wicked weapons as boarding-pikes, but which, to their credit, they used as clubs. The curriculum of navy-drill provided for this warfare, and a well-trained blue-jacket with a club in his hands has the same advantage that a skilled fencer has with the sword. Untouched by the lunging strokes of his opponents, the sailor whirled his light, hard-wood foil, — a condemned billiard cue, — punched, parried, and cut with it, but little by little was

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forced backward, away from his friends and into the crowd of indignant townspeople.

He would not have fought thus unequally had not his shipmates been interfered with. At the beginning of it, three men had run along the wet sidewalk, turned into the street, and hastened past the fighters toward the groups at the nozzles, as the place of most ominous trouble. Two were the mayor and chief of the fire department. They waved and ordered the firemen back, and the other, a young and well-dressed man, sprang among the sailors, shouting: —

"Stop this, men. Stop it at once. I am an officer. Lower those nozzles — down to the ground. Stand on them. Instantly. Do you hear me? Turn off your water, gentlemen," he called to the others; "my side will obey."

They had obeyed him. Some recognized Mr. Breen, and all knew the unmistakable accent of an officer accustomed to authority. They saluted and answered respectfully. Shouts were passed around the corners, and soon the water ceased to flow. "Fall in over here at the curb," ordered Mr. Breen, sternly, "and give an account of yourselves."

"Can't we help Halpin, sir," asked Casey, anxiously, as he fitted the grummet to his cap. "He's gittin' killed over yonder."

Mr. Breen turned and looked, just in time to

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see the fighting sailor struck on the forehead with a heavy stone flung from across the street. Flourishing the half of his broken stick, he staggered and fell. The officer hurried over, followed by the sailors, but before they reached the prostrate figure, Mabel Arthur was bending over it.

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CHAPTER XIX

"MABEL — Miss Arthur," said the officer, gently, as he touched her arm; "here is your father."

Mr. Arthur almost dragged her to her feet and back through the crowd, scolding her in a most shocked and fatherly manner.

"Why are you here? Going to the theatre with Mr. Breen? Um-humph. Might better have remained at home on this occasion, with the streets full of rioters. I haven't dared go to dinner."

"But, father," she stammered, "it is the boy — Dick Halpin; you know — you remember. The boy who went away, and — oh, father, come back. I want to be sure that he is not seriously injured."

Her father humoured her, and the crowd parted for them to make their way back. Dick was hurt, but not seriously. He was on his feet, shaking his head in quick jerks to prevent the blood from running into his eyes. Wet, muddy, and bleeding, with his long hair dishevelled and his face contracted in pain, he was not an agreeable sight, and Mabel shuddered. He was facing partly away

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and could not see her. Mr. Breen held him by one arm and Shannon by the other, not to support, but to curb him; for he was muttering to himself and was not yet responsible.

"It was a stone, neighbour," said one of the firemen to him, "not us. We couldn't touch you. I'm sorry now, old man, and here's my hand on it. I know a good man when I see him. We don't throw stones — not us."

"Who was it?" asked Dick, weakly. "Who hit me?"

"Never mind who it was, Halpin," said Mr. Breen, sternly. "You have disgraced yourself and the service enough as it is."

They faced him the other way, and Dick saw Mabel — saw her turn from him with an expression in her face which somewhat resembled the look of terror and horror it had held on that last day in school.

"Fall in here, men," called Mr. Breen. "Double column with Halpin between you. Webster, I know you; take my place. I hold you and Shannon responsible for his safe delivery on board the *Vermont*. Halpin, you are under arrest. Make way there, please. Forward — march."

With Shannon and Webster holding him tightly, and his bodyguard changed to a guard of arrest, Dick was marched through the streets toward the station. But Shannon and Webster need not have

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held him. He was tractable and harmless, for the transient light of Mabel Arthur's smile had gone from his soul.

The ensign hastened after, and the crowd gradually dispersed, except for a small contingent that jeered the sailors on their way. On the station platform, where Mr. Breen halted them to wait for the train, Morrisey appeared, with his silk hat on an even keel — sober-faced and anxious in manner.

"I know ye're an officer, sir," he said to the ensign, saluting him in the way that only man-of-war's men acquire. "I'm Tim Morrisey, late quartermaster of the *Kearsarge*, and I want to say a word for the boys, and Dick there. Dick's a good lad, as ye must know, sir, and all he wanted was to do up the gang o' school bullies that killed him once, and he brought his mates to help him. But he didn't get 'em full. I did that, not knowin' how far they'd go; but Dick's innocent of it. Why, ye can see, sir, that Dick hasn't been drinkin'. Plase be aisy on 'em, sir. Now, will ye sind Dick over to my hotel under guard, sir, and I'll clane him up, so he can go aboard presintable like, and not fall foul o' the master-at-arms?"

During part of this discourse Mr. Breen had been compelled to smile, which had encouraged Morrisey to continue.

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"I will consider your protest," he answered; "that is all I can say."

Morrisey drew over toward the boys, not to talk, — he knew better, — but to encourage them by his presence and sympathy. They were quiet and sober now, and stood shivering in their wet clothing. Dick, smeared with blood, was seated on a bench with his chin in his hand and eyes on the platform.

"Webster — Shannon," said Mr. Breen, "take Halpin over with this man and attend to his wants. Halpin, will you go on board to-night if I give you your liberty?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick, rising to his feet and saluting.

"And the rest of you. Do you all belong to the receiving-ship?"

"Yes, sir," they answered; "all of us — we'll go aboard, sir — we want dry clothes."

"Very well, go along. You need not report to the executive officer, Halpin. I will attend to your case myself when I come on board."

"Thank ye, sir," said Morrisey; "I consider this a personal favour, sir."

Mr. Breen went back to spend the evening at the Arthurs. He had managed his share of the proceedings without getting wet, and was still a well-groomed, presentable young man.

Next morning the baker's dozen of sailors intro-

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duced themselves to the *Vermont's* surgeon in the sick-bay, all suffering from splitting headaches. But Dick's headache was hardest to cure, for he had barely escaped brain concussion. Truly, thirteen is an unlucky number.

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CHAPTER XX

ONLY by friction with his fellows and by the development within him of instincts based upon ancestral experience does man acquire a conscience. Continuing on from the embryonic reproduction of organic change of the lower to the higher types, the young of the human species takes up at birth the progress of the ape-like men, and — in the case of the male — lives through every chapter of human history. The small boy in his primal impulses is as savage as his prototype of the jungle. He is afraid of the dark, he is afraid of the storm, and whimpers at the sound of thunder. In this, of course, he is worthy of pity and comforting words; but, when he has conquered his cowardice to the point where he dares pounce upon a weaker creature, he will torture it mercilessly. His occasional combats with his fellows are always short — a few blows are given, and one flees, pursued by the other, courageous because confident. But should the vanquished, with blind rage serving for courage, return to battle, the flight will be reversed.

Epitomizing as he does the infancy of the race, a boy's attitude toward the world is antagonistic.

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Yet there are times during his passage through the Neolithic Period when he would rather beat you at marbles than frighten you with a pistol. Later on he prefers the latter. Then there are times when nothing suits him but a bow and arrow, — times when he will hide for days in a cave which he has found or dug for himself like his cave-dwelling ancestry, when he will practice strenuously at hatchet-throwing, knife-throwing, spear-throwing, and is joyful of soul when he can break a window with a stone from his sling. Banded with others he will often cruelly maltreat a weaker boy — a captive — from another neighbourhood, and his hunting games — survivals of the chase — sometimes end fatally to the losers. He is a robber for the love of the sport. But in time — somewhere between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one — these primitive attributes, under the influence of punishment, reward, and good example, may be civilized out of him, and he becomes fit for acquaintanceship. But he never ceases to lie.

The development of the girl differs slightly from that of the boy. Very early — perhaps in the prenatal life — she loses the killing impulse, and only resumes it under later stress of jealousy or motherhood. Leaving her Paleolithic brother to work out his own salvation in his own way, the baby girl leaps at once into the pseudo-civilization

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of the Middle Ages, with its emotionalism, its enthusiasm, and its supernaturalism — which existed in women before the Middle Ages were dreamt of. She is a monitor and a preacher from promptings within herself, and when she has learned to talk she tells her small brother what he should and should not do — not because she knows, but because she feels. She remains in the Middle Ages while she lives, a preacher, a monitor, a dictator. She is often no more than a nagging scold, but on the whole her life is cleaner, brighter, and more moral than that of her brother. Once past the sugar-bowl period, her pilfering propensities are easily dropped — or suppressed until poverty or kleptomania bring them to the surface; but her cowardice, nourished and conserved by physical weakness, often remains with her to the end, and in mendacity, compelled by the restrictions placed upon her by society, she outclasses her brother. A man is by nature a liar from the cradle to the grave. A woman is more — she is an actress.

And this brings us to the object of this analysis. We know that Dick Halpin has painfully struggled from the Age of Stone into the Age of Iron. We must also know that Bessie Fleming — sweet, and wholesome, and lovable — is a fibber. As to Mabel Arthur, we can only infer; the evidence is not clear.

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On the following Sunday the two girls, each suitably arrayed, went to church, and when the service was over, met in the vestibule. After kisses and compliments they went out together, and Bessie said effusively: —

"But where have you kept yourself, dear. Why, I haven't seen you since before the riot. Wasn't it dreadful?"

"Wasn't it? I have been ill all the week," answered Mabel. "I only got out to-day."

"Weren't they horrid? They almost killed poor Dicky; they swung him around by his chain and he hasn't been himself at all since then. And, do you know, it was Dick Halpin — our Dick, for whom we named him — who rescued Dicky. Wasn't it nice? Such a coincidence, too."

"Did he? I understood that he was the ringleader — the master spirit."

"Not at all, Mabel. You know I always stood up for Dick, and always will. He was quelling the riot all the time."

"I thought Mr. Breen did that — he, and father, and the firemen."

"But Dick was first. I was standing in a doorway — I got dreadfully wet — and saw it all. I saw you, Mabel. Did you see Dick? Isn't he big, and strong, and handsome?"

"Handsome?" murmured Mabel, with a sweet

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and pleasant drawl in her voice; "I don't know. I did not observe him closely; but I think that Mr. Breen is rather nice looking."

"Do you? Now, I think Dick is much handsomer. I suppose you heard how he thrashed those boys who treated him so cruelly."

"I did hear something; but, you know, I am not greatly interested in his exploits."

"No? But he did, Mabel — all but one, who ran away. Anna was there and saw it all. Wasn't it poetic justice — that he should come back so big, and brave, and strong? And he was so small and helpless when they ill-treated him. You know how I felt. I believe I was the only friend he had in the whole world."

"Well, I felt at the time, and feel still, that I had done my duty when I exonerated him. George was only a foolish boy, you know. Of course, I can understand that it is different with you. Mr. Breen said — you know he called that day and spent the evening with us — well, Mr. Breen said he was a notorious fighter, always in trouble."

Bessie's small hand opened spasmodically, much as a cat shows her claws; but it was gloved, and Mabel smiled, sweetly and fearlessly.

"Did he really call on you, Mabel?" asked Bessie. "How nice; he called at our house, too; but Dick was there and he went away —

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he went right away. I was surprised. And so he called on you?"

"He had something to say to me," replied Mabel, dreamily. "I suppose that he called to say it."

Bessie's face paled a little, and her eyes opened wide, but she made no direct inquiry as to what Mr. Breen had to say. After a moment's silence she said: —

"I don't think that Mr. Breen is at all reliable. I think he is very much of a flirt — so insincere and inconsistent. Dick is different. I received a lovely letter from him last evening. Shall I show it to you, Mabel?"

She drew forth a letter which Mabel took, languidly, and experiencing a little difficulty in reaching in between the edges of the envelope, removed her left glove. She was not left-handed, but by removing her right glove she could not have displayed a large diamond on the third finger of her left hand.

"Oh, Mabel," exclaimed Bessie, as she seized the hand, "isn't it beautiful?" Her cheek was whiter and her lips twitched.

"Yes, isn't it?" responded Mabel, as she pressed the gem to her lips. "It came last evening, like your letter, from New York. Let's see what your gladiator says.

"'My dear friend Bessie,' she read — "he writes

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a good hand, doesn't he, Bessie, for a common sailor — 'My dear friend Bessie, you have probably formed an estimate of my general character that no apology from me will change. Yet it is due myself as well as you to offer one. I am sincerely sorry for my conduct, and ask your pardon. It must have seemed unqualified rowdyism to you. I know that I have no reputation in Allville to be proud of, but I did, and would again, value your good opinion. Yours truly, Richard Halpin.'

"Quite an apology," said Mabel, as she handed the letter back; "but why should he apologize to you, Bessie? Did he — did he hit you?"

"Why, Mabel — the idea. He thought, I suppose, that I should blame him for poor Dicky's suffering; and then, too, I was his only friend."

"And I suppose you will answer?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, Bessie, when your Dick buys the ring he must induce Mr. Breen to select it. Mr. Breen is certainly a judge." Mabel fingered the brilliant, and looked lovingly and proudly at it.

"If it should come to that, Mabel," answered Bessie, somewhat incoherently, "I think he could choose for himself. There are mother and Anna — beckoning," she continued brokenly. "I must leave you, Mabel; and do come around."

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"Yes, and do come yourself. I've so many things to tell you. Good-by, dear."

"Good-by, Mabel."

They kissed and parted on the corner around which Dick had stalked his officer, Mabel going back to her home with lips tightly pressed, and Bessie joining her mother and sister with a look on her face that brought anxious inquiries as to her health. Neither girl called on the other, and when they met again, they kissed, talked commonplaces, and parted without kissing. When next they met the kiss was omitted, and the conversation short. Next time, Bessie was looking at a show-window as Mabel came abreast, and on the next occasion this happened to Mabel. Finally, they passed with stately and silent salutes.

From a masculine point of view it was certainly wrong for Bessie to give a false colouring to Dick's ambiguous apology; but she was a woman; and women have their own code of honour, which we must not question.

Instead of writing candidly to Mr. Breen explaining Dick's position, as masculine ethics would have prompted, Bessie wrote to Dick, and not being sure of his abiding-place, sent the letter in care of Mr. Breen. The ensign received it, studied the superscription and postmark, swore softly, and sent it by a messenger-boy to Dick,

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who, with a sunburst of court-plaster on his brow and dismal gloom in his soul, read it in the light of a bow port.

It was an angry letter, telling of the diamond ring, and defining Dick's position very clearly; but as it contained confessions wrung from her maidenly heart, it will not be given here. If Bessie, prompted by the inscrutable feminine code, had hoped that Dick would show it, or hint as to its tenor, to Mr. Breen, the letter failed of its mark; for Dick understood none but the masculine code.

But the enclosed clipping from the *Allville Times* was certainly meant for Dick's own reading. It ran as follows: —

Yesterday afternoon a gang of drunken sailors came to our peaceful town, and after a noisy orgie in the whiskey hole run by Timothy Morrisey, began the task of "painting the town." Thanks to the well-known inefficiency of the police force, they almost succeeded. Their first assault was directed at the graduating class of the high school, as a result of which several of its members are now ill in bed from the severity of their injuries. The commencement exercises will probably be postponed. It seems that the ringleader and chief rowdy of the gang is one Richard Halpin, a former member of this class, who was expelled from school four years ago for stealing. He then ran away from home, and now, it seems, returns to wreak his spite upon his innocent and

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unoffending classmates, and bring added disgrace upon himself — if that were possible — and on the honoured name which he wears, before the grass has sprouted on the graves of his loving guardians, whose hearts he broke and whose deaths he hastened by his villainy.

After their attack on the school the drunken horde, first overcoming our police, raved through the streets, smashing windows and maltreating citizens; then the fire department was called out by the mayor. Our brave firemen would certainly have overcome the rioters but that the appearance of Ensign Breen of the navy, a guest of our mayor, rendered action unnecessary. Mr. Breen marched the crowd down to the station with the ruffian Halpin under arrest. Mr. Breen deserves the thanks of the community for his firmness and courage, and it is to be hoped that the fellow Halpin will be severely dealt with on shipboard; but, with the expected reorganization of our police force, we can confidently predict that should he set foot in our town again his reception will be warm.

Efforts are being made toward the rescinding of Morrisey's license, as the place has too long disgraced the town.

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CHAPTER XXI

ON board the *Vermont* there were twelve distinct and conflicting accounts of the "hurrah" at Allville given to the ship's company; but Dick, from whom most was expected, had nothing to say nor would he express any interest in Kerrigan's report, reluctantly given, that Devlin and himself had been unable to catch the long-legged Ned Brown. He was a changed young man, and in a very bad way. Not even the proud approval and warm congratulations of Bronson could lift him from the mood that had engulfed him. He despised himself. He had seen glimpses of a life in which he could take no part. He was mentally benumbed, and Bessie's angry letter, with its news of his aunt's and uncle's death, affected him much less than it could have before his trip. Nor did Mr. Breen's later attitude help him. There had been no summons to the mast, but the ensign had sent for Dick, and with constrained manner and averted eyes told him that, having learned of certain events of his school-days, connected with his recent conduct, he had decided to make no report to the executive officer. It was right, he said,

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that Dick should know to whom he was indebted. He could thank Miss Arthur. He could go forward.

And Dick had sullenly thanked the officer, and had gone forward, trying to hate Mabel. But it was impossible, in spite of what seemed to him to be the nature of her intercession — even though she must have told of his disgrace at school. For what else would have so turned Mr. Breen against him?

Gradually, however, Dick came back to something like his old genial self, yet could not, by the time he lined up on the Cob-dock with lashed bag and hammock, — one of a draft for the *New York*, — look on Mr. Breen without silent malediction.

Strong to his resolve to quit the navy when his time expired, he, with others of the draft, had entered early protest against being sent to a foreign station. The protest, usually considered, was ignored, possibly from an inward knowledge among the officers that the *New York* might remain on the coast; but this reason was not given to the men, and there was bitter talk of desertion before the ship sailed. Dick, laying this additional grievance at the door of Mr. Breen, who had promised to have him selected from good-will, and had now done it from ill-will, seriously thought of it himself.

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A few happenings strengthened his half-formed resolution. The *New York*, a two-masted, three-funnelled armoured cruiser, was taking in the coal discharged before docking. As her bunkers held over twelve hundred tons, it was a long, distasteful job for the men, and nothing else being required of them until the carpenters, calkers, and machinists had finished repairs, the off-watch was allowed daily liberty. Fate and Dick's captain-of-division had decreed that he should take his place one morning in the lighter alongside to shovel coal into canvas bags, and hook on the davit whip by which they were hoisted up to the shutes. It was a dirty and dusty job, and, along near noon and knocking-off time, just when he was as dirty, dusty, and black as he could be, he looked up from a filled bag to see Mabel Arthur gazing down on him from the after part of the superstructure-deck. Beside her was Mr. Breen, pointing at him, and farther along were her father and brother inspecting a searchlight. There was little reason to suppose that they could know one grimy shoveller from another at that distance, or that Mabel would have recognized her own brother so disguised, but Dick looked downward with cheeks burning under the dirt. He had been pointed at, and he felt his humiliation to the full. He shovelled energetically for a while, and when forced to straighten

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his aching back, he looked, not aft, but forward, and there she was, staring down on him from the forward bridge, while Mr. Breen, amidship, was pointing up at the fighting-tops, seemingly explaining things to Mr. Arthur and George. Dick hung his head again, and worked, perspiring. He had little false pride, and coaling ship was a necessary evil, but he should have liked to be cleaner when she looked at him — not labouring like a longshoreman at the most unsailorly work in the navy. Having climbed into a port to avoid meeting her, he met her again on the lower deck, forward of the engine-room skylight, where the visitors and Mr. Breen were picking their way aft over scattered lumps of coal.

"Here," cried the officer, sharply, "get a broom — there's one — sweep this gangway clear. Lively now!"

He spoke to Dick, but neither he nor the gentlemen seemed to know him: though Mabel certainly did, as was evidenced by the fixity of her gaze over his head while he swept coal out of her way, and by the sweetness of the smile she gave the next grimy tar — it was Casey — who kicked a sleeping pig, the ship's mascot, from her path.

Raging inwardly, Dick finished the task, flung the broom from him, cleaned up, and ate his dinner. He kept out of sight until two o'clock, when a boatswain's-mate piped the liberty crowd

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"He stared defiantly into her Eyes as she watched the Men told off."

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to the quarter-deck; and here, standing in line — sweet and clean, and good-looking — he stared defiantly into her eyes as she watched the men told off. But he could not keep it up; she joined him in the stare; his eyes shifted and came back, — she was still gazing at him, — and they sought the deck. He looked again, with the defiance gone, and in place of it, the dumb, pleading look of a spaniel. Then her own eyes dropped, a blush came to her face, and she looked at him no more. She was not conquered in the battle of eyes; she had merely searched well, and learned what she had not known.

On the dock Dick gave his name to the cadet in charge of the squad, and obtained permission to visit the *Vermont* before going out of the yard. He saw Bronson and had a stormy quarter of an hour with him, at the end of which the latter said gravely, "And I hoped to see you a warrant officer, but you won't have it; so, go — go along, and good luck to you, Dick."

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CHAPTER XXII

FATHER, daughter, and brother left the *New York*, with Mr. Breen in civilian's clothing and carrying a heavy satchel. The ship lay on the inshore side of the Cob-dock, just around the corner from the *Vermont*, and a straight sidewalk led from her gang-plank to the landing of the ferry-scow, a cabined craft which pulled itself by means of a winch-engine back and forth on a stationary chain. Dick Halpin hurried down another walk which led from the *Vermont*, and boarded the scow just ahead of them. When they entered and sat down amidships he was seated in a forward corner, with his back turned squarely toward them; but his cap was slued on his head, and the name of his ship on the ribbon was readable.

"There's one of your men, forward," said George, as Mr. Breen, with a sign of relief, deposited the satchel on the deck. The officer glanced, nodded, and sat down beside Mabel. Other passengers — sailors, marines, and workmen — crowded in, and Dick was nearly hidden from view.

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"Does he have to shovel coal?" asked Mabel in a low voice. "Is that his duty?"

"Who do you mean?"

She leaned forward, looked at Dick's broad back, and said, "Dick Halpin."

"Why, yes — coaling ship — in his turn — unless he gets a rating. But he hasn't had time for that. Was he shovelling?"

"Didn't you see him? You pointed right at him — down in the boat. He saw us. He must have thought we were talking about him."

"Didn't see him at all."

"You ordered him to sweep the floor for us — down cellar. Do you always speak to him like that?"

"Was that Halpin?" asked the ensign, with a smile. "They're all alike, sometimes. Certainly. We can't take time to request them to do anything. We tell them to."

She was silent; the noise of the chain going over the winch made conversation difficult, and when the scow reached the landing they all arose and crowded forward to step ashore. "Here, my lad," said Mr. Breen, briskly, tapping Dick on the shoulder. "Going out? Carry this grip for me to the gate — eh — Halpin."

Dick turned with a flush on his face that was almost black; but he touched his cap and took the bag. George smiled cheerfully, but Mr.

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Breen seemed disturbed and embarrassed. He stepped after Dick with a hand half extended for the burden, but it was too late; he was on the landing-float, and before the ensign reached it, was swinging up the walk as though anxious to escape from them. Mr. Breen paused and looked at Mabel's face; but she averted her eyes as she took her father's arm, and he walked to the gate beside her brother. Outside, Dick was waiting. No doubt his training was strong upon him, yet there was a suggestion in the way he was swinging the bag of a desire to hurl it from him, as he had once thrown his schoolbooks. Mr. Breen approached and relieved him.

"I didn't know you, Halpin," he said. "Believe me, I had no wish to work you or humiliate you before people you knew."

The unforgiving Dick turned a sullen face away from him, then back.

"Wouldn't you like, sir," he said in a voice which, though high-pitched and trembling, was but little louder than the purr of a cat, "that I should polish your shoes? There's still time — while I wear this rig."

"Halpin, you are insolent."

"Am I, sir? Perhaps. I happen to be a free-born American in temporary servitude. Not for long, however, though I may finish my time in the brig. Let me suggest, Mr. Breen,

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tact and wisdom on your part when we meet after that."

He swung on his heel and strode down the street toward the Brooklyn Bridge. Mr. Breen, biting his lip, returned to his friends, and they boarded the first car that came along, which, being delayed, did not make good time; so, they mounted the steps to the platform just ahead of Dick, who had walked the distance, and as they seated themselves, Mabel looked at the ensign with an expression that he did not understand, but which brought him to her side.

"Your friend has given warning," he said, with a troubled look at her. "Going to skip, I judge."

"What?"

"Desert."

"Don't they hang them, or shoot them for that?"

"Not in time of peace. A man is no good if he doesn't want to stay; so we seldom look for them. The worst that could happen is a couple of years in the Charlestown naval prison. But it's too bad. He's a good man."

"Good? Yes, good to put in coal, and sweep, and carry things, and be spoken to as you could not safely speak to a servant," she answered quickly. "But he must not. It's so disgraceful."

While the officer was contriving a safe answer

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to her puzzling comparisons, she arose with resolution in her eyes; then, while he held up a deprecatory hand to Mr. Arthur, who was about to speak, she marched out and through the train to where Dick sat alone in the rear car, looking out on the river and shipping.

"Mr. Halpin," she said, as she took the seat beside him.

He turned and the anger left his face. Reaching up awkwardly, he got his cap off and held it in his lap, while he stammered: "Miss Arthur. I didn't — how do you do?"

"Mr. Breen has just told me that you mean to leave the navy — to desert."

"Yes. I've had enough of it."

"But you know the consequences? It will ruin you."

"It's hard to ruin a foremast hand, Miss Arthur."

"But the disgrace — think of it. Please do not."

He was silent, and his hand shook as he gripped his cap.

"You know," she went on, "I was in a way connected with your leaving school and home, and I've always wanted to tell you how sorry and ashamed I was, but you never came back; and you cannot wonder that I want to see you succeed."

"There's no success in the navy," he answered

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doggedly. "The laws forbid it. After years of service and hard study, I might become a boatswain or a gunner, and there I'd stop. And I hate the life. No, Miss Arthur, I'll succeed, I promise you that. I'll meet him yet as an equal."

"Who?"

"Mr. Breen; but I've no chance in the same ship with him. He's got his knife into me now."

"Does he bully you? Oh, I noticed — I was so sorry. Promise me, please, that you will not desert. For my sake —"

"I did something once for your sake," he answered insanely, "and got the worst of it all around. Here's one result. After four years' service I may be body-servant — a bag carrier — to the man you are to marry."

She started up, with two very red cheeks, and left him. At the door she halted and turned as though she would have come back, but he was staring sullenly across the car, and the train was entering the New York terminal. So she joined the others.

"I can do nothing with him," she said to Mr. Breen. "He is angry — and — he never has forgiven me. But you can reason with him."

"I? Why should I?"

"You must. You have ill-treated him. There he goes now — between the cars; hurry."

"But why? What for? What am I to do?"

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"Catch him. Talk with him. Explain what I cannot. Apologize to him. Yes, you. Put aside your dignity for him — for me. Please — hurry. Oh, please. He turned up the street."

"I'm in for it," said the officer, dryly. "All right; I'll do all I can for him. Here, Mr. Arthur, will you please leave the grip in the parcel-room at the station, with my name. I'll report, Miss Arthur, if I live through it; but I ought to have some brass knuckles, or a club. Good day."

He hastened on and up Park Row after the tall blue figure which he could see over the heads of the crowd. "One sometimes wonders," he muttered as he dodged along, "just what constitutes conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman. As an officer, I ought to call a policeman; as a gentleman, I must do as I'm bid like a little man — run after this unlicked scrapper, pat him on the back, soothe his injured feelings, and forever lose his respect for me as an officer."

He took his eyes off Dick for a moment or two as the crowd impeded him, and when he looked again he was not in sight.

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CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Dick had left the car he hurried past the others and up Park Row in the mood of an Apache at a torture-bee. He had given pain, and savagely he rejoiced. What right had she, in her insolence of beauty and position, to patronize and pity him? He wanted none of her pity.

But underneath this raging was an obtruding consciousness that he had acted like a sulky boy, and for a moment it took charge of his soul — for a moment he would have rushed through fire to reach her and humble himself, and in this moment he turned to go back, to follow her home if necessary; but he saw Mr. Breen pushing toward him through the crowd. "D——n him," he growled; "why don't she send her precious brother too?" He darted into the nearest doorway; it was a pawnshop with another entrance on William Street, and passing through he doubled back, and by a passageway alongside the bridge reached Park Row again at the foot of the entrance. They were not in sight, and he paused.

"No," he muttered, "I'll fight it out to the end. I'll prove myself good as she or her ensign."

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He was less savage now, but more consistent in his resolve, and he crossed City Hall Park, found a barber shop and had his hair cut. The result, as he looked in the mirror, did not please him. His features seemed larger and coarser, and near the borders of the cropped hair were white streaks of skin that had been shaded from the sun. "Spotted like a brindle cow," he grumbled, "till I bleach out; but I've got to be civilized." In a near-by clothing store he bought a suit, hat, linen, and neckwear, which he donned in the dressing-room, and then stepped into the street with his uniform in a bundle, almost unrecognizable to a shipmate.

He would pawn his uniform; but unwillingness to meet Mr. Breen prevented him seeking one of the numerous pawnshops in Park Row, so he recrossed the Park, went east below the bridge, turned north, and in Catherine Street, down near the river, found a pawnbroker who advanced five dollars on the suit. He would have purchased it outright for ten, for it was of the finest cloth and flannel, stitched and starred and crow-footed with silk; but down in Dick's rebellious heart was the man-of-war's-man's love for his mustering-clothes, and he refused to sell. When he was established as a landsman and a gentleman, it would be a pleasant reminder of the life he had escaped.

It was growing dark when he left the pawnshop.

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The wind was rising, and damp snow filled the air, which, melting underfoot, made a dirty slush that wet his feet in a block's walk. He regretted not buying rubber overshoes, not because wet feet were unusual, or troubled him in the least, but because he must now act and feel like a citizen; he must also have an umbrella, and when he had obtained money, an overcoat, which he would wear through the winter whether he was cold or not.

His humiliation and anger at noon had prevented him eating much at dinner, and feeling hungry now, and reasoning that Mr. Breen could not remain very long in Park Row, he tramped through the slush to this street of cheap restaurants; for he must economize until he found work. Before a huge dish of hot corn-beef hash, he resigned himself to the luxury of being a landsman. "Think of the way mess cooks spoil good grub," he mused as he ate. "Couldn't cook like this if you paid them. Four years and a half in the navy — where you think by regulation — with a boss at each hatchway. No more for me. Ashore a man has one boss, and sleeps in a bedroom with a window in it."

He was again in the street, the warmth of the restaurant behind him, the damp chill of the storm all about him. He must find a boarding-house, and look for work in the morning. Nothing better of the first presented than one of the twenty-

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five-cent lodging-houses on the Bowery, so he sought one, and sat in the reading-room — to wait for bedtime. About him were all manner of men, in all stages of poverty — all out of work, as evidenced by their depressing, half-hearted conversation. These men were not succeeding on shore, and some were well educated and intelligent. He tried to read a newspaper, but gave it up; for, either from his well-filled stomach — which was beginning to distress him — or from the backward swing of the mental pendulum, he could not keep his mind off the day's happenings. He saw her face, with its new expression. He shut his eyes to see it smiling from the window of her home, but the vision would not come; all he could see was shock, and pain, and embarrassment — the red spots on the cheeks.

In five minutes the reaction had set in strong; and he reviled himself, doubting his sanity — again in the agonies of dejection and self-contempt. He understood the full force of his brutal speech, not in its effect on her, — for he had never dreamed that she had cleared him of the charge which embittered his life, — but as it appealed to his manhood and sense of fair play. Then his love for her arose in its strength to punish him. She had come, voluntarily, and apologized for a childish fault, in order that she might beg him, for her sake, not to brand himself with the stain that could in

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no wise reach her. What did it mean? he asked himself. There flashed over his mind a momentary thought that it meant love for him; but he put the thought from him as impossible — not for a brute like him. It was her generous nobility of soul acting in spite of his oft-repeated boorishness.

He arose and went out into the storm, fighting his way against it to Catherine Street, down which he turned, only to find the pawnshop closed; for it was after six o'clock. He was disappointed; he would have resumed his uniform and gone aboard the ship that evening, to take up the burden she had asked of him; and it now meant a night in the lodging-house, which, in his present mood, was repugnant to him. He went slowly back, for he was not feeling well; the dull pain in his stomach had increased, and, under a lamp-post, a sudden fierce gripe brought him up, half bent over, and clinging to the iron post for support. A passer-by touched him on the shoulder. It was Mr. Breen, wet and bedraggled, with a tired, angry face.

"This you, Halpin? So you've done it, have you?"

"No, Mr. Breen," gasped the subdued Dick. "I've changed my mind. I'm going aboard in the morning, when I get my clothes."

"You're going back," said the disgusted officer. "If I'd known that I'd have done something better with my time than searching every dive in sailor-

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town for you. May I ask you, in all due humility, what has changed your mind?"

"May I ask you, sir," said Dick, speaking with difficulty, "why you waste your time looking for me?"

"Because a lady asked me to."

"That — is — why — I serve my time, sir — because she asked me — O, Lord!"

"What's the matter with you? Halpin, what ails you?"

"Stomach-ache, sir. I ate some Park Row hash."

The young officer grinned in spite of his mood. "You want some peppermint, or ginger, I should say. Come around the corner, Halpin. It's a tough joint — I was just there — but the nearest, and — any port in a storm."

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CHAPTER XXIV

IT was not an ill-looking place, as saloons go, to which Mr. Breen assisted Dick. The barroom was small and the bar short, but it was neat and clean. Around the walls were prints and models of ships, brigs and schooners, and on the shelf back of the bar was the inevitable full-rigged ship in a bottle. The floor was covered with clean sawdust, and two round tables, with chairs and convenient cuspidors, crowded the small space available. At one table sat three men, stupid with drink. Their nondescript dress, gathered in parts from the seaports of two hemispheres, betrayed the merchant sailor, and their blonde heads and red faces their Scandinavian birth. They glanced with dead eyes at the two newcomers and went back to their meditations and mutterings. Two men, sober, hard-faced, and keen eyed, arose from the other table and stepped into a rear room, but were called back by the man behind the bar — a large, brawny fellow, with beetling eyebrows and a long pointed nose.

"Want to sit down, gents?" he said. "Good fire in the back room. Bad day, ain't it?"

"Yes," said the ensign, whose glance at the

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table seemed to have prompted the man's suggestion. "This — my friend here is sick. Bring two hot whiskeys, and put a good dose of ginger in one."

"Yes, sir. I'll fix 'im up."

Dick was in dire pain, unable to stand erect, and too humble of mind and weak of will to resist or resent the officer's assistance. They sat down close to a hot stove in the back room, which, besides the table and chairs, contained no furniture or decorations. A door in the side of the wall seemed to lead to another room and a stairway to the floor above.

"Sailors' boarding-house, sir," groaned Dick as he collapsed on the table.

The hot stimulants arrived and were quickly consumed; then Mr. Breen studied the ghastly face opposite him.

"Feel better, Halpin?" he asked at length.

"Yes, sir — a little."

"It isn't often, Halpin, that an officer gets a chance to hobnob with a blue-jacket; but I want to talk with you, and you seem to need it. Circumstances have brought us into contact lately in ways not prescribed by the regulations; and I have noticed an antagonism on your part which I have tried not to earn. Now, I want to ask you — is it because I surprised you the other day — at a time when number three makes a crowd?"

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"Well, sir," answered Dick, evasively, preferring this view of the case to stand rather than confess his jealousy, "Bess — Miss — the young lady felt very badly."

"Naturally" said the ensign, with a short, dry laugh.

"And then, sir," went on Dick, more truthfully, "you put me under arrest in my own town, when I thought — and I still think — that I was in the right. Then, to-day, you showed me up before my worst enemy. There's an old difference between George Arthur and myself."

"I cannot ask nor receive any confidences regarding Mr. Arthur; nor do I wish to probe into your private affairs; but, at times — what's the matter? Are you worse?"

Dick had lost all sense of gravitation and physical adjustment. The walls were moving around him and separating from each other and the ceiling. The table seemed tilted, and he gripped it by the edges to prevent it slipping away, while Mr. Breen's earnest face was above him looking down.

"Hang my fool tongue," muttered the ensign. "The Lord only knows what's back of this mix. And — and — what ails me, I wonder. Stove too hot — I'm light-headed. Let's get out, Halpin."

Dick painfully sat erect, lurched backward,

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pulled himself forward with his hands and got on his feet, only to sink into the chair again.

"I'm drugged, thir," he said thickly. "Look outh — board'-houthe-crimpth — shanghai." He slid sidewise to the floor and lay still.

The officer scrambled to his feet and staggered to the door, but found it locked.

"Police!" he yelled. "Police!" And grabbing table and chairs for support, he made his way to the side door, which also was locked.

"Dry up in there," said a voice from the bar-room.

The ensign answered incoherently, reeled across the room, and fell to the floor; then the door opened and the bartender appeared, followed by the two men he had called back.

"Shut the door," he snarled. "Them Souwegians ain't none too full."

He searched the pockets of the unconscious men, removed what was of value, and said: —

"Up stairs wid 'em. Get 'em ready — and get them two bags in the closet for 'em. Hurry up, now. Tug's goin' down at eight. If they want more dope, sing out."

He went out, unlocked the front door, looked at the three stupid men at the table, took his place behind the bar, and the saloon resumed business.

That evening a tug steamed down the bay through the storm. In the warm pilot-house, be-

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sides the tug captain, were a shipmaster, a Sandy Hook pilot, and a boarding-house runner — one of the two men who had got Dick and his officer "ready." Blood money paid by captains for sailors is not due until the goods are delivered; so this runner, as he explained to the tug captain, was going down with the two men, who had signed articles that morning, had "jumped their allotment," got drunk and been caught, and now lay on the forward deck in the sleet and snow with their heads pillowed on their clothes bags — sleeping it off.

Before midnight, a ship put to sea; and before she was two days out the whole world had arisen to the news that the United States battle-ship *Maine* had been destroyed in Havana harbor.

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BOOK III

BARBARISM

CHAPTER XXV

"HEY, below, there! Hey, below! What's the matter? Hey? Heave out—heave out. Out on deck wi' ye!" Dick heard dimly, groaned from the pain in his head and joints, and rolling over, went to sleep again.

It was perhaps not a minute, but it seemed to him hours later when a hard fist knuckled his throat and he felt himself being dragged forcibly outward and downward to a bone-wrenching collapse on the floor. Then again he heard the angry, strident voice:—

"Get out on deck to yer work, ye bloody ——. Out wi' ye, or I'll make ye wish ye're in h—l."

"What is it—what's up?" he asked brokenly, as he looked up at a figure standing over him in the flickering light of a flare lamp. Around him were bunks, and on the stanchions between them hung oilskins, coats, and clothes bags. From the open door at the end of the apartment the cold wind of a bleak morning came in, chilly and damp.

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"Get out o' this and clap on to them flyin'-jib hal'ards," bellowed the man above him. "Quick, or I'll lift ye."

Dick was not quick, either in his movements or in his mental processes; his head was aching and his brain reeling from the effects of the drug, and even the fall to the floor had not thoroughly awakened him; so he was "lifted" — a few inches, at least — and rolled a foot nearer the door by the impact of a heavy boot; but it was a rubber boot, and no bones were broken. Arising unsteadily, he yielded to the pushes and punches of the other and staggered through the door to the deck without, where, to the music of flapping canvas, whistling wind, and their own discordant calls, men were setting the flying jib.

"Get a holt o' them halyards," came the voice of authority in his ear, followed by a blow that launched him nearly headlong into the group of men hoisting the sail. He was accustomed to obey, but not to being struck; and when thoroughly awake and able to remember the events of the night before, and to realize that he was now at sea, on board a large, square-rigged ship, he asked the man nearest him for an explanation.

"What ye growlin' 'bout, matey?" answered the man. "Ye've just run foul o' the bucko second mate — the boy bucko. We've been doin' the

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same all night. He's big enough, but too young for the noise he makes."

"Then I've been shanghaied," groaned Dick. "Is Mr. Breen aboard?"

"Who — yer side partner? He's aft wi' the other watch. Oh, ye've struck a sweet ship, matey. Been to sea before?"

"In the navy."

"Whew — both o' ye? The Lord help ye then, till ye larn yer work."

"Dry up that guff at the hal'ards," bawled the officer from amidships.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the man cheerfully. "Up with her, lads. Up wi' that headsail. Take a hold here, matey," he added in a lower tone to Dick. "Take a hold, or ye'll have him at ye again."

And Dick pretended to pull on the halyards — which was all that he could do in his demoralized condition. The sail was soon up, and they trimmed down the sheet at the noisy behest of the officer. Then they were all driven aft to assist others of the crew in mast-heading the mizzentopsail-yard. The strong, fresh breeze was rapidly clearing Dick's benumbed faculties, and as he hauled with the others, he searched his memory in the effort to locate the second mate's voice. He had heard it somewhere, he was sure, but could not remember where, and though daylight was breaking on the

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lee beam, it was still too dark to distinguish features. Indeed, it was only when the second mate called to them to "bend their backs," and he muttered something in reply, that he became aware that the unkempt figure just in front of him on the rope was Mr. Breen.

"None of that, Halpin," said the latter in an undertone. "Keep your mouth closed tight until I can talk with you. They've put us in separate watches. Roused me out at midnight."

"Very good, sir," answered Dick.

"And don't 'sir' me here. Do as they tell you, and say nothing. We're in a bad fix."

Though the air was now clear of snow, and the storm of the night before had sufficiently moderated to permit the carrying of all three topsails, maintopgallant-sail, and flying jib, there was still a force to the fitful puffs of the westerly wind and a snap to the offshore sea which hammered the ship and made more sail inadvisable. So when the mizzentopsail was up and the yard braced, a bellowing roar sounded from the poop-deck: "Relieve the wheel and lookout. That'll do the watch."

"Your watch on deck, youngster," said Dick's friend, as they coiled up the gear. "No choice between ye when we lifted ye up the side; but the mate picked yer chum and the second mate picked you. Wonder where the bloody mate is.

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Haven't heard his yap this watch, but he was busy enough up to midnight."

"What ship is this," asked Dick, "and where's she bound?"

"*Mary Earl*, o' Bath, Cap'n Bilker, o' Cape Cod. Ever hear o' him? First mate's another Cape Cod murderer, and second mate's a bran' new bucko just out o' the boy's-room, I take it — not used to bossin' men, an' not more'n half a seaman, but a jim-hickey with his fists. Guess you an' me an' yer chum are the only Americans forrard. We're goin' out to Hong Kong. My name's Sawyer, o' Hoboken, an' I go to sea to keep out o' Jersey. How'd ye come to be shanghaied?"

"Knockout drops."

"That's bad. Stick to yer own boardin'-house. Ye'll be robbed all right, anywhere, but yer won't be doped if yer 'greeable. Guess we'll get some coffee soon — what they call coffee, I mean; the doctor's turned out."

Others had coiled up the rest of the gear and the two went forward, Dick observing in the gathering light that Sawyer was a tall, loose-jointed man with a hooked nose and a rather humorous cast of countenance. The "doctor" was up, smoke was coming from the galley chimney, and the watch on deck were grouped under the weather-rail near the fore rigging, evidently waiting for the early coffee served in all American

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ships at "turn-to." The other watch had gone below, but as Dick joined the group the ensign appeared at the forward corner of the house and beckoned to him. He followed to the top-sail-sheet bitts just forward of the foremast, and here, in an open space which precluded listening, Mr. Breen said in a low voice: —

"Know anything about the American hellship, Halpin?"

"No, sir — only what I've heard."

"Drop the 'sir' while we're here. Fix the habit upon you, or you'll get us both into trouble. This is a hellship, and the hellship is the blackest shame resting upon America. I've had enough — at least, all I dare to risk. I went aft and protested to the captain when they roused me out at midnight, stating that I was a naval officer. I was kicked around the poop-deck and thrown down to the main deck. Believe me? Not a bit. Thought I was drunk — and to tell the truth, my speech at the time would bear out such a construction. We're in rags. I've got a bagful more of them, and suppose you have, too, unless some one has stolen them. Now, this much I know, from what I have seen and heard: the mere presence in the forecastle of an educated man is a continuous menace to the brutes who command and officer such ships as this, and is warrant enough for them to murder him; for they know that he is apt

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to make trouble ashore. As the law now stands they can punish an insolent sailor with a blow, and if he returns it, they may kill him. I cannot convince them of my identity — neither can you. So I shall resent no insults until I am able to act; and as for you, do as you're told, keep out of trouble, — for I may want you in a hurry, — keep your mouth shut, call me by my last name, and don't let them see us together too often."

Before Dick could reply the ensign was gone; so Dick secured another man's tin pot and his own share of the coffee, which had been brought to the port forecastle. It was vile stuff to begin with, and had been rendered viler by the molasses stirred in to sweeten it; but it was hot, and it warmed Dick's chilled and aching body, and cleared more of the fog from his brain, so that by the time a rasping "Turn to, there. Buckets and brooms. Get out that deck-pump forrard there" came from amidships, he began to feel a lively interest in the speaker — the man who had dragged him from his sleep and struck him. He watched the giant figure lumbering forward, and even stepped into his path for a better view of his face. He knew him. It was Pig Jones.

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CHAPTER XXVI

PIG JONES, four years older, grown to man's physique, and with the facial characteristics — slanting forehead, protruding chin, and small squinting eyes — which had given him his nickname among the boys, developed into as unpleasant a combination as may go toward the make-up of the human countenance. It was a brutal, sensual, cruel face — a face bearing a standing invitation to an honest fist, one that most men would feel pleasure in striking. And as Dick backed toward the bucket rack at the foremast, it followed him with a leering expression strongly impregnated with curiosity, wonder, and doubt.

"Hey, you!" he cried, in a tone as unpleasant as his face; "you the man I pulled out at eight bells? What's your name?"

"Billson, sir," answered Dick, remembering the ensign's injunction as to caution, and influenced in his choice of a name by the momentary comparison with his late antagonist which the officer's giant figure had aroused.

"Billson, hey? You look bloody like a plug-

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ugly I went to school with. Look out ye don't look more like him, or I'll take it out o' you."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned Dick, submissively, as he took down a couple of buckets. The officer stepped toward him, searching his immovable face for any hint of sarcasm behind the answer, and finding none, thundered forceful objurgations to the rest to "get that deck-pump aft."

In the washing down of the deck that morning the second mate watched Dick continuously, and so impressed him with his suspicions that, when opportunity offered, he requested Sawyer to tell no one that he was a man-of-war's-man; for he had reason to believe that Pig had known of his choice of a career. And when the watch turned out at seven bells he apprised the ensign of his change of name and his reasons.

"One of the gang, Halpin? Well, if we are any good — you and I — you'll have a chance at him before long. And perhaps not with your fists. I'll do murder before I'll submit to this. Now, Billson, get to work; here comes our superior officer."

Mr. Jones was coming forward. The ensign stepped into the forecastle to his breakfast, and Dick resumed his deck-swabbing. There was strong cause for the ensign's bitter tone and murderous mind. You cannot drug, rob, and strip a naval officer, dress him in greasy rags, swear at

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him and kick him until he is willing to pull wet, hard ropes through a stormy mid-watch, and have him in the mood of the gentleman — temperate of mind and refined of speech. Dick was now the milder of the two. At eight bells his watch was relieved and he went to breakfast, — manufactured coffee and cracker hash, the latter an unsavory mess of broken hardtack and gristly beef, soaked over-night and baked brown. Confiscating as his own a last voyage pot with pan and spoon, he helped himself, wondering, as he forced the stuff down, how the well-fed ensign had succeeded; and there came to him a momentary feeling of ungenerous and anarchistic joy that this pet of society and the government knew now what sailors must eat. The mood was but transient, and left him with the filling of his stomach, so that when a loud summons for all hands to muster at the break of the poop came in through the door, he walked aft with the crowd of men, fully prepared to enter into any defensive and offensive alliance which Mr. Breen might propose.

He had rummaged the bedless bunk in which he slept off his stupor, finding a damp canvas bag filled with grimy working clothes, and a damp and greasy cap, which he had donned; but there was no time to change the rags he wore — drenched by the storm in the ride down in the tug — for dry ones, and he stood in that dishevelled crew perhaps

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the sorriest looking of all. The carpenter seemed prosperous, and the cook shone in immaculate white; but the men were badly blest, by nature and fate. Here and there showed a clean article of apparel, — a new cap or hat, shaming the garments beneath, a new pair of rubber boots, a new sou'wester, or a new sheath-knife and belt. But aside from these they wore the patched, fringed, and tar-bespoiled garments of their last voyage, and on each face was a common expression of earnestness and hopelessness. Over their heads arose the Roman nose and humorous eye of Sawyer, and in the front rank stood Ensign Breen of the United States navy, picturesque in his vestments, and with a countenance as woe-begone as it is possible for a shanghaied graduate of Annapolis to assume. The steward was at the wheel, and scowling down on them from the poop were Mr. Jones and a gray-bearded man who wore a slouch hat and long pilotcloth overcoat, in the pockets of which he kept his hands. They needed no introduction to know the captain of the ship. He slowly scanned each of the twenty men's faces, paced a few turns fore and aft on the poop, then brought himself up squarely against the monkey-rail, his hands still in his pockets.

"My name's Bilker," he said slowly and impressively; then, after a moment's silence, he repeated in a louder voice, "my name's Bilker."

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The men shuffled their feet uneasily under his stare, but none answered.

"I'm John Bilker, o' Provincetown," continued the captain, "and I've sailed ships out o' N'York and Boston for twenty-five years; and I 'low that in all that time I never let any measly gang o' gentlemen rope-haulers get the best o' me. You hear me? You hear what I say, you —— pack o' poor men's dogs."

He took another walk along the deck and returned. Dick glanced over at the ensign to note the effect of this language on him; but his dejected face was non-commital.

"In all my goin' to sea," went on the captain, his voice rising, "I never seen a worse lot o' beach-combers and river-thieves. There ain't a whole man among you — there ain't half a man; but there's a murderin' scoundrel among you that I want. Last night, along 'bout six bells o' the middle watch, my first officer, all fagged out from tryin' to get sail on a ship with a crew that don't know a buntline from a sheet, was woke up by a sneakin' thief goin' through his desk. Yes, sir — a sneakin', bloody-minded thief that tried to kill him, too, 'fore he got thoroughly woke up. Then he ran out on deck and forrard to the rest o' you. And that pore man is down there groanin', with his arm broken at the elbow, while the murderin' thief that done

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it is among you, laughin' in his sleeve, and wishin' he'd finished his bloody work. Now, I want that man to step out and own up."

Not a man stirred. They looked at one another with inquiry in their faces, then up at their captain, only to fall back, crouching, and scattering to the right and left, with involuntary raising of arms to screen their faces. Bilker had brought his hands out of his pockets, and in each was a bright revolver.

"Shove him out," he thundered as he levelled the pistols. "Give up that low-down scoundrel. I'll show him what he can do and what he can't do. Quick, you —— dock rats, or I'll hurt some o' you."

"Hold on, Cap'n," said Sawyer.

"Are you the man? Come out here."

"No, Cap'n, I'm not," said the sailor, stepping bravely up to the poop steps. "I'm no thief, an' if I was, I wouldn't be fool enough — hold on, sir; I wish you'd point 'em t'other way, sir. They might go off. What I want to say, Cap'n, if ye'll 'xcuse me, is that yer takin' a mighty poor way to get that thief, whoever he is. Ye begin by damnin' us all 'round, an' that nat'rally works men up against ye, and then ye pull yer guns. Now, what man's goin' to own up in the face o' threats o' bein' shot?"

"None o' your back lip. Don't you talk to me.

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"BILKER HAD BROUGHT HIS HANDS OUT OF HIS POCKETS, AND IN EACH WAS A BRIGHT REVOLVER."

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Come up here on the poop. I swear I think you know all about it."

Sawyer ascended the steps, was collared by Mr. Jones, and hurled against the forward cabin companion, near which he remained, with the second officer watching him out of the corner of his eye.

"Where's that counter-jumper who comes aft when work's goin' on swearin' he's an officer in the navy?" demanded the captain. His eye wandered over the crowd and settled on Mr. Breen.

"You the man?" he inquired, straightening one pistol toward him.

"It might have been me, sir," answered the ensign, mournfully. "Please don't shoot me, sir. I had dreams, sir. I have been drugged and kidnapped on this boat, sir, but I haven't done any harm, sir."

Dick was astounded, but held himself together; and the captain, searching keenly the sorrowful face beneath his gun, said: "Dreams? What you drivin' at?"

"I've always dreamed, sir, that I was an officer in the navy, and I was having such a dream when I waked up on that stage up there, sir, and you were kicking me."

"You're no sailor. What's your trade?"

"I'm a gentleman's man, sir."

"What?" roared the captain.

"A gentleman's man, sir — a valet. I cook

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welsh rabbits late at night for my master, and I wake him up in the morning, and see to his bawth, and sometimes I shave him, and I always have to press his trousers, and answer the bell — "

"That is, you're a flunkey."

"That's what they call us in England, sir."

"Well," answered the Captain, thoughtfully and contemptuously, "I guess you didn't break my first mate's arm." He put his pistols in his pockets and turned to Sawyer.

"You an American?"

"Yes, sir, an American," answered Sawyer, vehemently. "An American and an able seaman; and I've held command — I'm no fool to break into a first mate's room in this kind of a ship 'fore I'm twenty-four hours aboard."

"Held command? What in?"

"Sound schooners, sir. I'm no navigator, but I'm no fool thief — "

"Get down on deck. Find out who broke Mr. Thorpe's arm and I'll make you third mate."

Sawyer answered respectfully and descended, while Captain Bilker ordered Mr. Jones to set the fore and mizzen topgallant sails, relieve the steward at the wheel, and dismiss the starboard watch. No doubt Sawyer's logic had convinced him.

Later on Sawyer said to Dick: "Make me third mate, would he? If I knew the hero that broke that man-driver's arm, I'd be a father to him."

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CHAPTER XXVII

DICK would have talked further with Mr. Breen before turning in, but, on looking around for him, discovered that he was aft at the wheel; so he changed his clothes, arranged what was dry of his baggage beneath and above him for bedding, and slept until noon, waking at the stroke of eight bells practically recovered from the effects of the drug. On going aft to the galley at Sawyer's sleepy command from an upper bunk to "get the grub, youngster," he found that Mr. Breen had suffered later injury which had not yet come to him. He was at the galley door sawing wood for the cook, and his handsome face was disfigured by a black eye.

"Kicked and thumped away from the wheel for bad steering and for not knowing the compass," he said cautiously, in answer to Dick's look of inquiry. "Inconvenient and unpleasant, but necessary; I'm an ignorant landsman. Remember *your* part: do your work, as a *sailor*, and avoid all trouble. See me in the last dog-watch. Go ahead, now. Get your dinner."

He shifted the stick of cordwood along the sawbuck and sawed; for Sawyer — unknown by

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him — was coming to help Dick bring the dinner. At the same time the carpenter, with a bundle of oakum under his arm and a heavy calking mallet over his shoulder, appeared around the corner of the house on the way to his shop, just forward of the galley. The carpenter paused before the pile of wood at the moment the cook's black face appeared in the galley door. He was a particularly evil-faced negro, and the geniality of his race seemed denied him; for he looked sourly at Sawyer and Dick, saying: —

"Don't stand 'round my door axin' fool queshuns, now. Dah's you poke an' peas — gov'ment whack fo' all han's fo'ward till you gibs up de t'ief. . Take it an' gwan."

"What's this?" asked Sawyer, angrily, as he sniffed the mess in the dishpan handed out to him. "Government 'lowance ain't much worse than the regular thing; but why don't you sift out the maggots 'fore you cook up last v'yage peas?"

"Don't you talk to me, you no 'count trash. Don't you tell me how to cook, or I cut you all up; you see?"

He reached behind him and showed a sharp carving knife; and the fuming Sawyer went forward with his pan, while Dick cautiously picked up the pan of boiled salt pork. Turning with it, he beheld the carpenter, a large, bewhiskered, and

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dyspeptic-looking Scotchman, with his hand on Mr. Breen's collar. He had dropped the bundle of oakum, but still held the calking mallet, while the cook still held the knife. Dick set down the pan.

"Ye thunderin' loon," roared the big carpenter in the ear of the slimly built ensign, "an' why do ye no go aft to the poop wi' yer tools an' material. Wha put ye here, to scar up a good deck an' mak work for a mon wi' plenty to do?" He gave him a shake, then flung him against the rail. Dick waited for orders.

"If you please, sir," said the ensign, — and only Dick could detect the quiver of rage in the humble accents, — "I was told by the captain to saw wood for this gentleman, and he told me to saw it here."

"He did. An' say," he said to the cook; "d'ye ken na mair o' the value o' good plankin' than to sanction this?"

Out came the cook, his eyes gleaming and carving knife gripped tight.

"Don't you come 'round inte'ferin' 'tween me an' my boy," he said. "He's my boy, an' he's gwine to saw my wood whenebber I want him. You hear? An' he's gwine to saw it jess where I tell him, too; an' if you don't lak it, you go aft an' talk to de skipper."

"I'll talk to the skipper, nae doot," answered the

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carpenter, steadily, as he eyed the flourished knife; "but the question now is, are ye threatenin' me wi' that weepon? If ye are, I'll get along without him. Put it doon." He advanced toward the cook.

"Keep away dere, sah," stormed the negro, as he raised the knife high over his head. "I's a peaceable man till I's 'roused, but I's been a bad man in my time. You hear—"

The calking mallet struck him squarely over the eyes. It was a cylinder of lignum vitæ, about fifteen inches in length and three in diameter, banded at the ends with iron, and fitted with a small foot-long handle at its middle. Any one who has seen a ship-carpenter or calker at work can understand the development and mobility of the wrist-muscles brought into play, and with these muscles alone the carpenter had sped the mallet from his shoulder with the speed and accuracy of an Indian's tomahawk. The cook went down, but arose in a moment, smiling, — or, rather, grinning, — and looked wildly about for his knife, which had dropped from his hand.

"Fair exchange is nae rubbery," said the carpenter, coolly, as he twirled the knife by its handle, "an' I thout I'd trade weepons wi' ye; but if ye'd have mine ye maun go over the seed for it. It war no constructed for armour-piercin', an' caroomed on yer superstructure. Get ye into yer

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galley, ye swine, or I'll mak shark bait o' ye. An' I'll e'en report ye to the skipper an' keep yer toothpick for scrappers." He stepped forward, but the cook retreated into the galley.

"What's up here?" asked the second mate, appearing on the scene.

"What's up, sir," answered Chips, as he turned. "I war expostulatin' wi' this Senegambian about the condeetion o' the deck gin his wood-sawyer gets through, an' he come oot wi' his assegai; an' I've lost my best corkin' mallet—"

"Take this stuff forrard," said the officer to Breen, the sleep of his late watch below still in his eyes. "Don't ye know any more'n to saw hard wood over a bare deck?"—his voice was rising—"Hey? Don't ye know any more'n that?" he shouted, now thoroughly awake. "Get that dunnage on the fore hatch, spread it out, an' pile this wood on it 'fore ye do any more." He aimed a kick at Breen, who dodged it by an inch and went forward with his saw and sawhorse.

"What are you doin' here?" demanded Mr. Jones of Dick.

"After the dinner, sir," he answered, picking up the pan of pork.

"Did he have any hand in this, Chips?"

"No, sir. Merely a non-combatant spectator."

"Get out o' this," he said, and then, to the carpenter: "Chips, you're to keep yer hands off other

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people, an' yer nose out their business. I'll see to the men, an' I'll do the fightin'. That's what I'm here for. Give the doctor his knife."

"Vara good, Mr. Jones; but I'll no stand quiet 'fore a knife, I'll assure ye o' that." And the knife whirled through the door and rattled on the brick flooring of the galley.

"All right; an', Doctor, you keep off the deck, or ye'll have me foul o' you."

"Yes, sah," answered the cook from within.

The dignified peacemaker went aft, Chips entered his shop with his bundle of oakum, and the incident ended; but it was apparent to all who had seen, that henceforward there would be little of human brotherhood between the carpenter and the cook.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

"WHAT kep' ye so long, younker?" asked Sawyer, as Dick entered with the pork. His eight watchmates were seated, on boxes, buckets, and chests, around the dishpan, picking at what they had taken out. He placed the pork on the floor, seated himself on a bucket, and helped himself to the soup.

"Scrap," he answered. "Chips floored the cook with a calking mallet."

"What for?"

"Cook came out with his knife. What kind of provender is this, anyhow? Regular thing?"

"Government allowance; but the government don't prescribe that it must be good."

"I heave the whole bloody lot out der door," said a red-faced German, arising with his pan.

"Steady as you go, there, Dutch," said Sawyer. "Ye'll only have to lick it up in yer watch below. Sit down."

Dutch subsided, and Dick spooned off a portion of the fat pork. It quivered like jelly and filled the forecastle with its odour. Nor did its appearance speak well for it; it was pale, greasy yellow, speckled with green.

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"I don't know," said Dick, sitting back against the bunk behind him. "I can eat this when I'm hungry enough, but not yet."

"Plenty o' hardbread in the barge," said Sawyer; "we'll get our pound a day when it's gone; so go easy."

Dick munched hardbread, — which happened to be fresh, — and the example being set, one by one the men dumped their portions of peas into the dishpan and followed suit. They were a cosmopolitan crowd, representative of most maritime nations, and had already learned each other's names. Dick had given them his *alias*. Besides Sawyer, of Hoboken, there were the excitable German, Wagner, a fair-haired Swede named Swanson, a thin-faced, swarthy Spaniard who gave the name of Pedro, and an equally thin-faced and swarthy Frenchman named Frank, Winskel, a Russian, Peter, a West Indian negro, and Smith, a little, stoop-shouldered cockney with a villainous accent.

"We'll get this," said Sawyer, "until we tell the skipper who done up the mate last night."

"Who it was?" asked Wagner.

"Don't know, an' don't care; wouldn't tell if I did know. But it was none o' this watch, you bet. Billson's the only man I'd suspect, and he was dopy all night." Sawyer looked around rather contemptuously.

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"Well, Hi'll be jiggered if Hi can stand much o' this sort o' chuck," whined Smith. "Wot's a man goin' to do, hany 'ow? Gimme bellyful, Hi say, an' then Hi can work wi' the next man; but wot can any bloomin' bloke do hif 'alf starved. Hi'm one for goin' haft an' tellin' the hold man wot he his."

"Oh, shut up! Ye'd give a shipmate away quick enough, but ye wouldn't face anybody aft."

"Wouldn't Hi? Just make up the crowd to back me, Hi say, an' Hi'll do the talkin'," said Smith, arising bravely to his feet; "an' hif ye can't foller me, Hi might 'ave somethin' to say habout who done hit." He looked steadily at Sawyer, and the long Jerseyite also stood erect. He collared the cockney, shook him a little, smote him with the open hand on one ear, changed hands and smote the other, then sat him down hard on a chest.

"If I'd gone far enough to tackle the mate," he said sternly, "I'd ha' gone farther, an' been in irons 'fore this. Now, sing small. You know that it takes a better lot o' men than this crowd to go aft with any kind o' bluff. You know what it means, in a Yankee ship, to go aft with a kick about grub or anything else. Ye'll get nothin' but abuse, and if ye stick out, ye'll get buckshot."

The cockney was rather dazed, and remained quiet until he recovered.

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"I dont know 'bout dot," said Wagner, puffing vigorously to give draught to his pipe. "In my last ship we go aft und we kick about der duff dot had no plooms by it, an' der skipper, he coom down, an' he look, an' he give hell to der steward, an' we get plooms."

"What country ship was it?" demanded Sawyer.

"English — *Dunlock Castle.*"

"The difference 'tween heaven and hell. This is a Yankee ship with a Yankee skipper an' mates. I'm a Yankee — at least, an American — an' kinder proud o' my country; but I'm not proud o' some o' the products, an' I'd rather be in hell without claws than aboard of a Yankee ship wi' the mates down on me. Don't talk to me 'bout goin' aft 'less yer ready to murder the after-guard an' take the ship. What then? Can ye navigate? Is there a man here that can even cook the grub? Not one. S'pose ye could. Only a matter o' time when ye'd hang. They always get ye. But ye couldn't get that far. Think of it: here's the skipper with his shotgun and pistols, the big second mate — mate now — steward with a gun in his fist, Chips with his broad-axe, an' the cook with a knife. An' the cook's a whole team by himself. Made a knife-play on me 'cause I kicked. What did Chips do, Billson?"

"Made a row over the woodpile scarring the deck, and ill-treated the cook's assistant."

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"There ye are. Unless ye're ready to kill that cook, kill the second mate — any one here like to try that? — kill Chips, an' kill the skipper, ye might as well shut up 'bout goin' aft with a kick."

"I know dat cook," said Peter, the West Indian. "He don' 'member me, but I 'member him. I see um in Havana; take um three policemens put him in jail."

"Ver' bad temper, zat cook," said Frank; "zis morning I get ze coffee, and he say I get out or he scald me. What for? I do not know."

"Tell him to soak his head."

"No. What for? I take ze coffee — I get out. It is not pleasawnt to be scald."

"I was in a bark out o' Baltimore," said Swanson, the Swede, "and der cook was a nigger like dis, and he give us all der goot t'ings he steal from der steward; and den he take care and shake out der weevils from der bread 'fore he soak, and he boil der beef in fresh water, and he steal dat water — "

"And what'd ye do for the cook?" demanded Sawyer, with a grin.

"Oh, we bring his coal from der fore peak, and shop his wood, and wash his shirts — "

"Like a slave," interrupted the disgusted Dick. "D'ye call yourself a man? Say, Sawyer, admitting that the after-guard runs the watch on deck, does the cook run the watch below in these ships?

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Does the cook do as he likes? Hasn't he a boss?"

"Steward."

"And is the steward responsible for the way our grub is served — responsible for this?" He pointed to the pan of pea soup.

"Partly. But I reckon our steward don't dictate much to this cook. Notice him? He ain't bigger'n a pint o' cider."

"Ya-as, it was der steward," said Wagner. "He tell der doctor to give us our whack. Der old man didn't say notting."

"Well, Hi'll tell yer wot Hi'm goin' to do," said the rejuvenated Smith. "Hi'm goin' to bryke his bloomin' fyce in first time Hi catch 'im forrard o' the galley door."

"I yump on him mineself," added Swanson, approvingly.

"And I'll 'yump' on you if you do," said Sawyer. "Steward isn't to blame."

"Yes, it wass ze steward," said the Frenchman. "He weigh out ze beef and ze pork; he give ze cook his ordaire. We mus' punish ze steward for zis."

Pedro, the Spaniard, and Winskel, the Russian, understood English better than they spoke it; and their approving nods and gestures added to the steward's indictment. But before they had formulated a plan of punishment one bell (half-

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past twelve) sounded on deck, and they went out to relieve the other watch, Dick consistently carrying back to the galley the dinner he had brought — the pork dumped into the pea soup and the full pan fitted into the empty.

As he passed the carpenter shop, Chips, who stood in the door with a sober countenance, halted him by a gesture.

"Ye war a weetness, young man, war ye not," he said, "o' that cook's ungovernable temper and unwarranted assault upon me? Leesten; hark ye to that. Heard ye ever the like of it? He's been a-grindin' an' a-sharpenin' of his knife gone fifteen meenutes; an' I vara much fear that it's for me." Chips's bilious face took on a serio-comic expression of terror which brought a grin to Dick's; but he listened, and heard the "wheese, wheech" of a knife grating on a butcher's steel in the galley.

"He's after you, Chips," he said, as he passed on. "You're done for." The knife-grinding ceased as he stopped at the galley door, and the cook appeared — with empty hands.

"You take dat stuff back," he snarled, as he looked at the contents of the pan. "What you t'ink I want wi' dat? Dump it overboa'd."

"Dump it yourself," answered Dick, forgetting the ensign's injunction to avoid friction in his resentment of the cook's manner and tone.

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"Wha' you say? Hey? You talk lak dat to me?"

Dick still held the dishpans in his hands; and as the villainous black face leaned toward him — the teeth bared, the eyes glittering, and the angry contusion in the middle of the forehead rising high out of a network of wrinkles and swollen veins — he obeyed an impulse born of anger, racial hatred, and disgust. He lifted the pans, tilted them, and pushed them bodily toward the evil face before him. They landed squarely, and the cook was deluged with the mess; it ran down his face and neck and flooded the floor, and as he blindly struck the pans from his head, he slipped and fell. By this time Dick was far away — around the forward corner of the house with his watchmates, receiving instructions from Mr. Jones. It was an exploit that brought a glance of disapproval from the ensign as Dick sped past his woodpile, but joy inexpressible to the dyspeptic carpenter, who had witnessed from his door. As for Dick, he thought only of consequences — which was natural.

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CHAPTER XXIX

DICK worked in the rigging all that afternoon, and, though within shouting distance of Mr. Jones, he was surprised at the absence of any comment or criticism from the officer, who, throughout the whole watch, spoke harshly to the others. Perhaps this was because he was doing his work properly — perhaps because Mr. Jones and the carpenter ate together at the second cabin table, and at dinner the latter had told how Dick had ducked the cook. He was strongly confirmed in the latter guess when, from his perch aloft, he saw the officer pause at the galley door, where the cook, half in and half out, declaimed to him with violent gesticulation. Dick could not hear, but when the angry black face, shiny with soap, was turned up to him and a grimy black forefinger pointed at him, he had no doubt that he was the subject of conversation. Mr. Jones merely pushed the cook into the galley and went away.

The storm had passed, and, though the wind was still out of the west, there was no chance for the sea to rise very high so close to land, and

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the ship, with all sail set, was riding smoothly out to sea. It was famous weather for work. At three bells the watch below was turned out — Ensign Breen going wearily back to his wood-pile — and by supper time the two anchors were stowed inboard, the cables sent below, with fenders, mooring chains, gangway davits and grating, and nearly all the chafing gear was aloft and in place. Through it all, Dick, working at seamanly tasks, looked down on his officer sawing wood. At first he felt an ungenerous pleasure, due to his bitterness of heart; then he wondered at the ensign's courage in choosing so hard a part, and at his fortitude in playing it, and at last he felt an honest, manly indignation, based upon his training and respect for an officer of the navy. As he came down to his supper at three bells in the first dog-watch, the haggard look in the ensign's face and his slow, deliberate movements in piling the wood he had sawed moved Dick to an explosive burst.

"Say the word, sir," he said between his teeth as he halted before him, "and I'll brain them both with a handspike. I can do it — one at a time."

"You cannot," answered Breen, wearily. "You might disable one, but the other would shoot you. And if you did succeed — what then? Anarchy among the men. That could be quelled

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with powder and shot; but the final result — you would hang, and I could not save you. Leave it to me. I am working it out, and they do not hang government officers."

Dick went to supper. There was some villainous tea, sweetened with molasses, which he drank, and a lump of cold, fat, salt pork which neither he nor the rest could touch. The whole watch vented their feelings in profanity, and vowed dire vengeance on the after-guard; but little of it found form or expression except in Smith's avowed determination to "bryke the bloomin' steward's fyce," and they supped as they had dined — on hardtack.

Work was done for the day when they stepped out at four bells. The other watch had cleared up the deck, and near the fore hatch Breen's woodpile showed white and symmetrical in the gathering gloom of the chilly evening. Dick sat upon it, while his watchmates paced the deck under the lee of the weather rail. In a short time the ensign came out munching a biscuit. As he seated himself by Dick's side there came a sound from the galley, "Wheese, wheech."

"Hear that, Halpin — Billson, I mean?" he said wearily. "It's been going all the afternoon. It's for the carpenter, if it isn't for you. What made you douse him with the soup? You've made an enemy."

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"And a friend, too, Mr. Breen. Chips liked it, and I'm sure he squared me with the second mate."

"Please drop the mister and the sir. Try to remember. I'm a wood-sawyer, as Chips called me, and assistant to a darkey cook. What do you think of my day's work?" Mr. Breen looked proudly — as proudly as an utterly exhausted man may — at his handiwork, and lay down upon it. "To-morrow I must split it," he continued. "Abraham Lincoln was a rail-splitter in his time. Wonder if he ever got so tired as I am?"

"But why is it necessary?" asked Dick. "You are certainly the best man aboard — able to command the ship, but not used to manual labour. Can't we drill it into the skipper's head?"

"Go aft and try if you like; only, don't say I sent you. If I could get into that cabin and find a loaded revolver I think I could convince him, but I see no other way. When I'm able to move without pain I shall try it. The skipper stands watch now, and the first mate's confined to his room; so, with the steward asleep, the second mate asleep, and the skipper on deck, there might be a chance to sneak in through the forward companion and get his pistols."

"Suppose I try it to-night?"

"Not to-night. It will need two of us, and to-night I could not find energy to pull a trigger.

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Then, too, you must not take the initiative. You are a sailor, and most maritime law is devised for your punishment. I am an officer, and to a large extent exempt. I have the government behind me."

"What kind of a crowd have you in your watch," asked Dick, after a moment's thought.

"No two alike — all different: Dutch, Swede, Dago, Finn, and several unclassified. I'm the only American."

"My side is the same, excepting Sawyer. He's a Jerseyman."

"You're not thinking of organizing a mutiny, are you? That won't do. Think of the sensation and the newspaper accounts. Nineteen murderous scoundrels hanged for mutiny. Let me do it alone. It'll be merely a naval officer taking charge of a ship and sailing her to port. But who is Sawyer? The man who was called up on the poop this morning?"

"Yes. He's a good fellow and believes as you do. Says it'll make things worse to kick."

"He's a man I'd like to know. You're too successful with your fists, Billson, properly to appreciate finesse, or to conduct a successful mutiny. Go get Sawyer and introduce me. I'm too tired to seek him."

Dick went among the men and returned with Sawyer.

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"Excuse my not rising," said the unsubdued Breen. "I'm a little out of form, and the saw want's sharpening."

"An' it's a d— shame, sir," answered Sawyer, sitting down on the hatch and speaking softly. "If ye could only make the skipper believe ye, it'd be all right. He wouldn't dare haze ye — oh, I know an officer, sir (Breen had started up); I put in three years in the service; I could tell by yer walk, and yer voice, and the way ye carried yerself, an' when the skipper twitted ye about makin' a bluff, I knew for sure."

"Well," said Breen, coldly, "I hope you have kept your knowledge to yourself."

"No fear, sir; I've kept still, an' mean to; and if I can be of any service to ye aboard this hell-driver ye can call on me."

"Surely," interrupted Dick, "the three of us could take charge —"

"No, no," said the ensign, impatiently. "Sawyer, how about this grub? Shall we get such stuff right along?"

"Until we find out and give up the man that crippled the mate. We're on government whack."

"The old navy war ration, I suppose; but I've passed upon and condemned naval stores much better than these."

"True enough, sir. But a good many shipown-

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ers an' skippers buy up condemned navy stores. They're always used up, somewhere."

"And I suppose we must find out the man who assaulted the first mate before we have a change," said Breen, musingly. "What will the skipper do to him?"

"Oh, he'll be ironed, of course, an' perhaps thumped a little; but he's sure to be triced up by the wrists for eight or ten hours until he confesses, or begs off, or weakens somehow."

"Sawyer," and Breen's voice hardened, "do you know anything about the geography of the cabin — how the rooms are laid out?"

"Why, yes; they're all about alike in these ships. The two mates' rooms are each side the forrard passage that the companion opens into. Next aft is the dinin' room, with staterooms and storerooms along the sides, and next is the after cabin where the old man lives. His sleepin' room's in one corner, bathroom in the other. The after companion stairs is between 'em."

"Where does the steward sleep?"

"In one o' the rooms off the dinin' room."

"And the carpenter and cook?"

"Chips has a little kennel off his shop between the two forecastles. The cook has a room off his galley."

"Then, to get into the after cabin at night when the captain has the deck, a man will have

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to enter by the forward door, pass the doors of two officers, either of whom might be awake, and pass the room of the steward, who also might be wakeful?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sawyer, drop the 'sir' before you form the habit. I'm trying to break off Billson, here. Where would the skipper be likely to keep his pistols?"

"In his pockets until the crew get settled down; then in any good, dry place, I s'pose. It's a risky thing you're thinkin' of. He'd be apt to shoot you if he caught you in his cabin at night."

"Unless I shot him first. It all depends on those pistols. Well, we'll see. Who is this?"

A man had come forward on the lee side, and, approaching them, now peered into their faces. He was a small-sized man of quick, nervous movements, but evidently an American.

"What's wrong, Steward," asked Sawyer.

"I reckon you're the man. I'm looking for the man that talked back this morning. You him?"

"Reckon I'm him."

"Captain Bilker wants to see you in the cabin."

"What for?"

"I don't know."

"All right." Sawyer arose from the hatch. "I may come forrard feet first," he said to Breen,

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"an' I may go in irons, but — take care o' yerselves, both o' ye."

He took the lee side in going aft, but the steward, who had come this way, and doubtless found it draughty, sought the shelter of the weather rail in returning. He blundered into a group of Dick's watchmates, pacing up and down in the darkness, and then became invisible to the two on the woodpile. But his presence in the crowd was attested by his choked appeals for help, by the stamping and shuffling of feet, the muttered oaths and imprecations, and the thuds and smacks of fists and open hands. At last, just as Dick and Breen understood and resolved to interfere, he shot out of the crowd, followed by a whirling belaying-pin, dashed past them across the fore hatch, and with head lowered and elbows elevated sped aft on the lee side.

"That's because he's a small-sized man," said Dick. "They blame him for the way the cook served the grub. I wonder if they would tackle the cook, or the skipper."

"Hardly, I think," answered Breen, absently. He remained silent a moment, then said: "He didn't appear to be injured; but what would happen if they disabled him? Who would do his work?"

"Cook, I suppose."

"Don't think so — and his own, too; if one

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could do both they wouldn't carry two. If the steward was put out of commission, Billson, some one would take his place in the cabin. I am the likeliest man."

"Want me to do it?" asked Dick, surmising the drift of Breen's thoughts.

"No, no — by all means — no. Only as a last resort. He seems a harmless man. I was only thinking — and — I want only the run of that cabin for ten minutes."

"How about the cook? He's apt to make some kind of demonstration soon on account of the soup. Suppose I put him out; it'll be a pleasant job."

"And then you'll go in irons. No, I need you intact and free. If we could get some one else to do it?"

"Chips?"

"I've no love for him. He was rather harsh and unkind to-day. I wouldn't sorrow much to see him ironed for killing the cook, or the cook ironed for killing him. However, it won't be necessary. The skipper must stand watch until the mate recovers, and when the pain is out of my bones I mean to sneak into his cabin. I'm in his watch, you see, and it'll be easy on a dark night, along toward morning, when he is busy on deck, and the others are sound asleep."

Sawyer came round the corner of the house and joined them.

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"Going aft, third mate," he said. "The skipper don't want to stand watch. But I wouldn't tell him who the man was."

"Do you know," asked Breen.

"Yes; skipper explained how he broke the mate's arm. Mate turned out and clinched him in the darkness, but the man broke away; then the mate struck out at his face, and the man ducked and caught his wrist in both hands, then, quicker'n lightnin', he turned and brought the arm, elbow down, over his own shoulder, an' hove down on it. It's a trick known to trained fighters, an' it's also known in the navy. The man was no thief; he only wanted the mate's pistol, not knowin' that he went to bed with it."

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CHAPTER XXX

SAWYER turned and entered the forecastle, while Dick furtively glanced at the slim, graceful figure of his officer. As events crowded one upon another, he was being forced to a revision of opinion regarding his smooth-voiced and gentlemanly superior — this courageous and resourceful man of action. He was beginning to admire him, almost to like him.

"It was a foul trick," said the ensign at last; "but what could I do? He was a large, heavy man. I had suffered brutal treatment on deck, and feared for my life. We were taught that trick *sub rosa*, at Annapolis, as a resource in street riots, when firing was forbidden."

"You did right," answered Dick, vehemently. "I've practised it, but have never been forced to use it. I will, though, if necessary; and then, too, if you'd got the gun, you'd have shot him and the other two, before the thing was over. There's no fair play needed aboard this ship. It isn't understood."

"I wonder what use Sawyer will make of his knowledge, now that he is aft?"

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As though to answer this, Sawyer came out, dumped his clothes-bag on the hatch, and joined them.

"Don't fear that I'll give you away," he said. "I've sworn I don't know anythin' about it, an' that'll stand. An' I want to say that I think ye took the best plan in playin' flunkey. If ye'd acted yer natural self, an' shown yer knowledge o' ships an' sailorizin', ye might ha' convinced the skipper — when it'd be too late; for, havin' hazed ye an' kicked ye around, an' knowin' that as an officer o' the navy ye could make him sweat for it, he'd think the safest plan for him'd be to kill ye with work, somehow, or shoot ye as a mutineer, an' put ye in the log under the name ye've got on the articles, or have ye knocked overboard some dark night."

"That's the way I reasoned," said Breen.

"Yes, an' ye reasoned right. It's well understood that a gentleman, shanghaied in a Yankee ship, seldom finishes the passage; but as a harmless servant man, ye'd have a chance out o' yer pure innocence. It's best as it is. Now, ye'll be in my watch, an' I'll make it easy for ye; but understand, after I've gone aft wi' that bag, I'm an officer, and can't talk with ye, an' I've got to forget all I've said an' listened to, an' if I caught ye in the cabin I'd have to put ye out. Just the same — good luck to ye."

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He shouldered his bag and started aft, but turned and rejoined them.

"And, of course, ye'll understand," he said to Breen, "that my believin' in yer bein' a navy officer won't help ye any more now than if I stayed forrard. I might convince the skipper 'fore long. So can you 'fore long; but it'll be the worst thing that could happen after what has happened. Understand. You'll die — somehow; and yer death'll go into the skipper's official log as accidental, and one o' the mates'll witness the entry. That's evidence in court. I can swear only to my belief, after yer dead, and that won't help ye. But," he added, significantly, "I'll have the lower bunk in Mr. Jones's room." Then he was gone.

"There will be somebody each side of that passage, continually," said Breen. "The thing is boiling down."

From the darkness in the weather alley came the tall figure of the carpenter. He halted, listened a moment, then spying Dick and Breen at the woodpile, came down to them, uttering a warning, "Sh-h-h-h." Over the sound of the wind and sea could be heard the scraping of a knife on a steel.

"Hear it, lad," he said earnestly to Dick. "Hear the dark beast a-grindin' his knife? Is it for me or you? Ye soaked him weel wi' the soup, an' I'm thinkin' he's a mon to be watchful of.

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Losh, but it fair maks me nairvous — to hear that sound."

"It's for you," said Breen, guilefully. "It's for you. He told me he would kill you. Oh, he isn't afraid of you!"

"Get ye oot o' this, ye time-sairvin' flunkey," said Chips, angrily raising his open hand; and Breen moved quickly — with a billet of wood in his grasp.

"He says," persisted Breen, from a safe distance, "that he won't allow you or any one else to lay hands on me again. He says you're nothing but a white-washed Irishman —"

"Hush, ye bag o' bad teedings," roared the exasperated Chips. "An Irishman am I? Me, a MacPherson o' the hill clans! Oot o' my sight, or I'll —"

He advanced toward the retreating ensign, but Dick, grinning in the darkness, placed himself in the way.

"Never mind that," he said. "The question is: what about the cook? He's sharpening that knife for one of us — perhaps both. What do you think we ought to do?"

"I canna tell," was the mournful reply. "It's a mortal sin to hurt a ship's cook. He's a sacred pairson. Did ye no hear the second mate call me doon the day? But I can try the effect o' moral suasion. I'll e'en put an eedge on the broad-axe."

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He left them, and soon from the carpenter shop came to their ears the rhythmical thumping of a grindstone footboard, and the steady grating of cold steel pressed against its wet surface. It drowned the "wheese, wheech" from the galley.

"The man is frightened," said Dick, as the ensign rejoined him.

"So much the better," replied Breen, depositing his billet on the pile; "he is more likely to act. Keep it up, and I'll stir up the darkey. There goes eight bells — four hours more for me."

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CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN the port watch turned out at midnight they found but a gentle whisper telling of the gale of the preceding night, and a cold, full moon overhanging the southern horizon. By a prearranged schedule among the men, it was Dick's trick at the wheel from twelve until two; and, when the other watch had been dismissed, he went aft with a few misgivings, but thankful that wind and sea were easy. He had learned as much about steering as a man-of-war's-man may — which, beyond the technique, is very little — but had not acquired the nice "sense of pressure" which enables a trained merchant sailor to steer almost by feeling alone. After repeating the course given by his predecessor, and grinding the wheel over and back a few times with unnecessary vigour, he gradually brought the ship under command; and, as his nerves were now in good order, and his judgment of the best, he steered a course which called forth no objurgations from Mr. Jones, though he frequently peered into the binnacle, and as often turned to look Dick squarely in the face. Then he would resume his pacing back and forth on the quarter-deck forward of the after house. Twice

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before two bells had struck he stepped into the companion out of sight, and when next he appeared at the binnacle Dick smelled liquor on his breath. This time he spoke, thickly but good-humouredly.

"What's up 'tween you and the cook?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir; I lost my head and doused him before I thought."

"What'd he do?"

"Only made faces, sir; but he looked like murder, and I let go."

"Ye doused him well — 'cordin' to what Chips says," chuckled Pig. "But look out for him; he's a bad proposition; knifed two last voyage."

"Then you've been shipmates before, sir?" said Dick, hardly knowing what attitude to assume.

"For three years — in fact, all my goin' to sea. I ain't been long at it," said Pig, proudly. "I licked a grown man first voyage, and I took the fight out o' that nigger second voyage, an' he's afraid to look sideways at me now; and I licked the second mate last passage home. That's how I step into his place. That's what a skipper wants in an officer. Learn all ye like to — be the best seaman on earth, and 'less ye can thump men, and win out every time, yer no good aft."

"So I should think, sir," answered Dick, humbly; "but I don't think I'd do. I can work, but I can't fight. Never could, sir."

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"Well, ye want to brace up and learn to box, and — another thing, stick to yer skipper, and get navigation. I'm halfway into it now. No good pullin' ropes all yer life. What part o' the States ye come from?"

"New York state, sir — Port Jervis," said Dick, remembering his geography.

"I'm a York state boy myself," said Pig. "From Allville. Say, you do look mighty like a jigger I went to school with — Redhead Halpin; but your hair ain't red. He shipped in the navy and never was heard from up to when I lit out."

"Think he's dead, sir?" Dick was humanly anxious to hear of himself.

"Hope so. He was a mean sucker for the size of him. Give away a whole raft o' fellers and got 'em into trouble with the police. I wasn't in it, but I was one o' the gang that done him up for it. Then he got fired out o' school for stealin', and skipped the town."

"Oh, a thief, sir, too," said Dick.

"Well, no, to give the devil his due, he wasn't — at least, he didn't take the boodle in this case, but it looked that way. It came out months after he skipped, little by little; he was tryin' to shield the real thief, who was a pet brother o' the gal he was stuck on — see? And he got into his boots in the mix. The gal got dead on to it somehow — nobody ever knew what happened —

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and made her brother own up. Then his dad took 'em both out o' school —"

"Did Mabel do that?" burst in Dick.

"Hey? Say 'sir' when ye talk to me. Mabel, is it? Who said anythin' 'bout Mabel? Hey? That's the gal's name right enough, but I'd never ha' 'membered it, without hearin' it. Mabel, hey? I'm dead on to you, Dick Halpin, and I'll make you crawl 'fore I'm done wi' ye. What game ye up to, anyhow? Hey?"

"No game, sir," answered the flustered Dick. "I'm only listening to what you say about other people. I don't know them. How could I?"

"How could ye? D'ye mean to say yer not Red Halpin? How'd ye know that gal's name?"

"You spoke the name, sir," said Dick, gathering his wits, "and, not knowing her other name, or anything about her, I repeated it. I was interested. Most girls wouldn't have done that."

"I b'lieve yer lyin'. How could I speak her name when I'd forgotten it? Hey?"

"You must have remembered sub-consciously, sir. I've read about such things. Sometimes we can't remember things when we try, but they come to us, and then we forget again. You've noticed that, sir. I'm not your man, Mr. Jones. My name is Billson, and I never heard of these people before."

"Well, it's mighty queer, that's what I say;

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and if I find out yer lyin' to me, I'll make it so hot for ye that ye'll be glad to git overboard to cool off."

He moved down toward the lee-rail and met the captain stepping out of the after companion.

"Now, look here, Mr. Jones," said the latter, sternly, "I want you to understand one thing 'fore you're a minute older. I've listened to this pow-wow, and let it go on, wonderin' when you'd stop. If you don't know any more than to talk to the man at the wheel, you'd better go 'fore the mast again till you do know somethin'. You hear me? Don't let me speak to you again on this subject."

"All right, sir," answered the officer, sulkily, and the captain stepped up to windward and looked aloft. Then he looked at the compass. Dick had the ship straight on her course, though if the captain had looked five seconds earlier or five seconds later, he would have seen her off a full point. Tranquillity of mind is of first importance in good helmsmanship.

"I think, Mr. Jones," said the captain, dryly, as he passed Pig on his way to the companion, "that your yards will stand a little attention." Then he stepped down, and Pig faced Dick.

"I get this on your account, d— ye," he growled. "All right. Watch out."

Then he went forward, bawling "weather main

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brace," and Dick tried to adjust himself to the new conditions; but during the rest of his trick and the remaining two hours of the watch, which he spent in solitude under the topgallant forecastle, he had not succeeded.

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CHAPTER XXXII

AT eight bells Dick mustered aft to be counted with the rest — as is customary at the change of night-watches — and when his watchmates had turned in, he again sought his hiding-place; for he could not sleep even though the others had ceased to discuss a project propounded among them while he was at the wheel. He had felt no interest when informed of it, for he could think of nothing but his changed position.

Pig's statement gave a new colouring to each action of Mabel Arthur and to each of his own. She knew, and had known from nearly the beginning, that he was innocent. Her attitude had held nothing of pity or contempt, and her strange friendliness and interest in him, which he had believed arose from these two emotions, would now admit of a worthier animus. Dimly to his mind came the ensign's mention on board the *Vermont* of her intercession in his behalf, of all she had done for him, and he started out on deck, to call him from the group at the port forecastle door, and ask a repetition and verification; but there came to him the memory of Bessie's letter and the mention of a diamond

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ring. He must not cross-question a man about his fiancée; so he decided to say and do nothing at all. Breen may have heard of his early disgrace; but it was certainly of small importance to him, and an explanation might involve branding the ensign's future brother-in-law as a thief. He realized that this point of view was at variance with his usual habit of mind, and felt the better for it. He was uplifted, and his love for Mabel, and his reserve store of self-respect, held down through the years by the belief in his bad reputation, now arose and dominated his hatred of her brother and his jealousy of Breen.

"Perhaps," he mused, "this is the way a fellow must feel about such things to be a gentleman — worthy of her, for instance. Perhaps if I practised feeling this way, I might stop seeing red when things go wrong."

In the latter speculation he was confirmed by Breen, whom he sought to tell about Pig's increased suspicion and promise of a hot atmosphere. Breen, sleepy, cross, and sore in his joints, unsympathetically ordered him to play his part — to submit meekly to abuse, oral and physical, in order that he could be at hand when wanted, instead of down below in irons.

"It'll do you good," he concluded, "to be thumped around a little when you can't thump back. It'll develop your self-control — and, by

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the way, I suppose you know that both watches are going aft at breakfast time to protest against the menu. Keep in the background, and let the others talk. They're all brave enough for talking."

Dick turned in, and, being young, lost only an hour in getting to sleep. He awakened at seven bells with the rest, and, as agreed upon among them, ate no breakfast, the object being to preserve it intact for the official exhibition at eight bells, when the other watch could join them. There was much talking about past experiences of the kind in which victory had come to the narrators; but when eight bells had struck, they emptied their pipes and arose to their feet with more or less of anxiety showing in each face. Smith, true to his word, bore the pan of "cracker hash" with a clean spoon resting on top, and Wagner carried the coffee-pot and a tin pannikin. They trooped out, waited at the main hatch until the other watch had obtained their breakfast from the starboard galley door, then marched aft in a body, and Smith, the spokesman, told Sawyer at the break of the poop that they would like to see the captain. Sawyer nodded warningly, and entered the forward companion. When he came out he carried a double-barrelled shotgun, and following him were Captain Bilker and Mr. Jones, each with the same burden, and a tall, mild-eyed,

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handsome man with side-whiskers, who carried his right arm in a sling, and whom Dick had no trouble in identifying as Mr. Thorpe, the first mate. This man held a marlinespike in his left hand. As they ranged up at the monkey-rail and looked down on the men, the carpenter stole past them and mounted the poop steps with his broad-axe on his shoulder, the cook followed with his carving-knife, taking a position at the opposite end of the line from the carpenter, and the steward emerged from the after companion with a repeating rifle. Precautionary discipline was perfect. At the first sign of protest seven armed men were prepared to listen, and the cook and carpenter glared down on the sea slaves with no irrelevant side glances at each other.

"Well, men," said Captain Bilker, as with easy carelessness he rested his gun on the monkey-rail with its two muzzles looking down on them, "what d'ye want?"

"Just this, sir," said Smith, stepping out of the group with his pan of hash. "We hain't lookin' for trouble, an' we don't want to say nothin' that'll bring hon hany shootin', sir; but we just want to hask you, sir, if this is the right kind o' chuck to feed men on, sir. We hain't got nothin' to say 'bout hit's bein' government whack, 'cause that's hall we sign for; but we don't sign for maggots, sir — they're not in the scale o' provisions, sir."

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"No," remarked the captain, dryly, "they're not; you're getting them extra — good fresh meat over and above yer 'lowance. Mr. Thorpe," he said, turning to the first mate, "there's the crew; d'ye recognize yer man?"

"I do," answered the officer, a peculiar shine, or sparkle, in his blue eyes; "that outlaw sneakin' behind the others back there." He raised the marlinespike unsteadily in his left hand, and the men below separated and fell back. Then the marlinespike whirled among them, and Dick Halpin fell to the deck.

"By heaven, sir," roared Sawyer, "if this ain't pure murder I never heard of it. That man wasn't turned to till four o'clock that morning. He was doped, an' in his bunk, till Mr. Jones pulled him out."

"Shut up," thundered the captain. "Hush, or I'll put ye 'fore the mast again. Sure o' yer man, Mr. Thorpe?"

"Sure of him, sir?" said the mate, with a smile; "of course I am. Look at the size of him. Is there any one else in that pack able to break my arm? And I know his face and shape. I could see him well enough."

"You're wrong," vociferated Sawyer, angrily; "you're dead wrong, Mr. Thorpe. That man was stupid in his bunk all through that watch. Mr. Jones'll bear me out. He turned him to at

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eight bells, too dopy to know his name. Hold on, sir, don't point that thing my way!" Mr. Thorpe had drawn and was nervously raising a pistol as he looked at Sawyer, but the enraged third mate levelled the shotgun, and the pistol came down. Still holding the gun horizontal, Sawyer backed toward the rail and spoke to the second mate, while down on deck Breen helped Dick to his feet.

"Isn't that so, Mr. Jones?"

It may have been the menace of the shotgun, or it may have been Pig's surprise and shock at the sudden felling of a man before his eyes; for he was young yet. He answered truthfully.

"Yes, he couldn't be waked up till eight bells. I tried twice, and I know that. It was some one else, Mr. Thorpe."

"Enough o' this," said the captain, impatiently. "Take that man forrard. Mr. Sawyer, lower that gun, and remember where you are. I make all 'lowances for mistakes o' judgment, but — put that gun down. Yer on my poop deck."

"All right, sir, but I couldn't keep quiet under this."

"Now, men," said the captain to those below him, "take that fellar forrard, and take yer grub with you. I don't want to see it or smell it. Ye'll get no different till ye give up the man that crippled my first mate."

"'Ow can we do that, sir?" replied Smith.

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"He won't give 'isself hup, knowin' he's likely to be killed. An' there's no hother way to find hout. Hand we can't eat this stuff, sir."

"That'll do! Go forrard."

"Hall right, sir, we'll go; but can we hask you, sir, hif you'll make the cook shake out the maggots 'fore he cooks up the 'ash?"

It was a reasonable and a respectful request, and possibly Captain Bilker was impressed by it. He hesitated a moment, then turned to the steward.

"From this on," he said, "serve the men from the new stores; serve 'em the allowance, and not an ounce more. Now, men," he added, facing them again, "I'm givin' you new grub for a while — one month, we'll say; and if you don't produce that murderin' thief by then, back you go to what ye've been gettin'; but if you do, it's full and plenty."

"Thank ye, sir; we'll do what we can."

They went forward, assisting Dick. He was weak in the legs, somewhat dazed from shock and headache, and his face was streaked with blood from a furrow in his scalp where the point of the spike had ploughed.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

"AM I a slave, or a convict?" he asked weakly, as he sat on a chest a little later. Breen was bandaging the wound made by the marlinespike, and they were alone in the port forecastle, Dick's watch being at work on deck, Breen's in the other forecastle, trying to eat the breakfast. "Isn't there any law for these things?"

"Plenty of law, but little justice," answered Breen, with a hard look on his face. "Thank your good luck that you didn't get it between the eyes. You know something now about the kind of men they are, don't you? The mate thought nothing of flooring you on mere suspicion, and if he had killed you, would have thought as little. Same with the skipper. Very well. When we get our chance we'll shoot to kill; it's the only way. Hush — here's somebody."

The burly form of the second mate darkened the door, and his unpleasant voice said: —

"Come now, come now, goin' to soger all the watch? Come out o' that, and turn to."

"Just a minute, sir," answered Breen, with assumed cheerfulness. "I'll have him ready when

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I've knotted these ends. He's lost blood, and he's weak, sir."

"What guff ha' you got about it?" Mr. Jones stepped in, and advanced upon them. "Don't gi' *me* any o' yer slack." He struck open-handed at the ensign's face with force enough to stretch him out on the floor; then he collared Dick, and held him while Breen scrambled to his feet. The play of emotion on Breen's disfigured face was unpleasant to see, and he looked wildly about him. Perhaps it was well for all three that there was not a knife, club, or implement in the forecastle. He looked Mr. Jones squarely in the eyes for a moment, then looked down, and said quietly, but with the same tremble of rage in his voice that had marked his protest to the carpenter:—

"I was only stopping the blood, sir, so that he wouldn't get weaker."

"Dry up, ye farmer!"

He marched Dick at arm's length to the door, and actually kicked him through it. Dick fell in a heap without, and as he painfully sat up, then stood up, he saw, faint and bloodless as he was, the old reddish tinge creep over the sky, the deck, and the white paint work about him — not so brilliant as of old, but strong enough to remind him of his curse of temper; then he thought of Breen's mastery of himself a moment before, and by a supreme effort of will brought himself back to

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sanity. The paint became white, the sky gray, and the deck the dingy hue it had worn. But the effort of will, in his weakened condition, cost him his senses, and he fell in a faint.

When he recovered consciousness, he was in the same spot on the deck, and above him stood Mr. Jones with an empty bucket, while Smith was perched on the rail, with a draw-bucket.

"That'll do the water," said the officer, and Smith came down. "Now, then," he roared at Dick, "goin' to get up and turn to, or d'ye want to be tucked in yer cradle and rocked to sleep?"

Dick staggered to his feet and managed to remain erect; but he could not speak, and things looked hazy and indistinct to him, the second mate's huge figure being nothing but an opaque blur. Then a second blur moved into his imperfect circle of vision, and he heard the captain's voice.

"You blunderin' fool!" it said. "You all-fired senseless idiot, are you tryin' to kill this man, jess 'cause ye know how? Don't ye know when a man's had enough, or will ye ever know anythin'. I've watched ye for the last ten minutes, bullyraggin' a man already under control, with the rest o' yer watch sogerin' around doin' nothin' and everythin' shakin' aloft. 'Tend to yer knittin' now, or I'll have no more o' ye."

Mr. Jones took a hurried look around and aloft,

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and left them to brace the yards for a shift of wind. Captain Bilker regarded Dick, who, dripping wet and shivering, with face pale as death, and his bandage resting on one shoulder, was holding to the pin-rail for support.

"What's yer name?" he asked.

"R-R-R-ichard Halpin — R-Richard Billson, sir, — Richard H. Billson, sir."

"Well, Richard H. Billson, are you the man that crippled my mate?"

"N-no, sir," stuttered Dick. "I never saw him before this morning. I was in my bunk when that happened, sir."

"How bad are ye hurt?"

"Scalp wound, Capt'n; but I'm weak — I can hardly stand up."

"Go to yer bunk. Peel off them wet clothes, and I'll send the steward forrard wi' some medicine to keep down the fever. Take it, and don't turn to till ye feel like it. Yer no lazy man's clerk, I can see, and I don't want any sick men 'board my ship."

"Thank you, sir."

Breen, who had remained awake, assisted him into his bunk, and the steward came forward with hot water, bandages, and medicine, and ministered unto him, with the result that he slept through three watches, awaking at supper time, still weak and nerveless, but clear-headed and with appetite

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to enjoy his supper. It was cold boiled beef and hard bread; but not being more than a year old, it was palatable.

He found Breen sitting on the fore hatch staring into the blackness under the topgallant forecastle. He inquired of Dick's health, then pointed under the forecastle.

"See it?" he said. "Split it all this afternoon, and piled it — all by myself, too. I'm proud of it — I really am. I like to look at it. It fascinates me. And the cook gave me a piece of pie. Here's your half." He handed Dick a small wedge wrapped in paper.

"No, no," protested Dick, with a laugh. "It's good, of course, but I'm filled up, and anyhow, I'm more accustomed to junk and hardtack than you."

"Take it," commanded Breen, sternly. "Do you think I've resisted the temptation to bolt the whole piece for a whole hour, to weaken now? Eat it. Consider it an order."

Dick ate the pie.

"I thought for a moment, this morning," continued Breen, "that I couldn't hold my luff — when that brute hit me. But I did; we've got to submit and be ready to act together."

"How did it affect you?" asked Dick. "Do you ever see red when you're angry?"

"No, do you?"

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"Very often. I did this morning, when he booted me out; but I was too far gone to do anything. I generally go crazy."

"Bad. That's when men do murder. A weakness of the vascular system — I heard a lecture about it once — certain nerve centres fail to act, and there's a rush of blood. But it's all under control of the will. Just hold your temper."

"I did try this morning, and it didn't last but a second or so. But I dropped."

"Keep on trying. You've got to, anyway; and it'll do you good. You're too good a man to hang."

"What do you think of the skipper's action in sending me below? He can't be a whole brute."

"No man is a whole villain or a whole saint. We're mixtures. It was good business to give you a chance; but he'll kick you, himself, if he thinks it necessary, just as often as would your friend Pig. He kicked me right off the poop; but perhaps he wouldn't waste any kicks that were needed elsewhere."

"And what do you think of the cook. Is he sorry for you?"

"Not a bit — he's a corruptionist. He's as nervous as Chips — and ten times more of a cutthroat and coward. That pie was a bribe. I'm to watch the carpenter and post the cook about his intentions. Begun already. Told him Chips was sharp-

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ening his broad-axe and means to split his head open."

"He can't have any love for me. I'm surprised that he hasn't made some kind of a break my way. What do you want me to do if he comes for me with that knife?"

"Run. Your legs are long. But I think he won't bother you. He's a spiteful devil, with murder all through him; yet he's a rank coward, and when I told him you'd killed a coloured man in Charleston, another in New Orleans, and had cleaned out a New York cake-walk he expressed great curiosity, and wanted to know if you were down on all his race, or merely him. Told him you were not particular who you killed, as long as it was a coloured man. Questionable business for a naval officer to be in, but — all's fair in love and — hellships."

Dick smiled weakly, in the darkness, remembering the similar report he had given Bessie of Breen, and both were silent for an interval; then Breen spoke, slowly, as though to himself: "'All's fair in love and war,' they say; yet there are some things that are not fair — which are decidedly unfair."

Dick waited for more, but nothing more came. Then he thought, for the first time since the drugging, of his own unworthy position — that it was on his account alone that this well-bred young

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gentleman was in the forecastle of an outbound ship, sawing wood for a negro cook.

"I know what you refer to, Mr. Breen," he said; "and, believe me, I'm sorry; I wouldn't have had it happen for the world."

Breen faced him squarely in the darkness, but there was no light for Dick to note the expression of his face.

"I know I was a fool," he went on, "an insolent fool; and after putting it in your power to have me court-martialled, I find that you preferred chasing me through sailor-town to help me."

"Oh," said Breen, with a long breath. "That's what you mean? I wasn't thinking of that. And don't apologize, Halpin — Billson, I mean. We're getting along first-rate now, and perhaps we can get to be good friends. There's much about you that I like and admire. But when I followed you that evening, I hated you a little bit more than I ever expected to hate a fellow-man. I didn't do it for you, but for Miss Arthur. And I don't know but I'd do it again, if she asked me to."

It is not pleasant to hear of being hated, even though the hatred is dead. Dick did not answer, and the two sat silently on the hatch, staring mechanically at the white sheen of the woodpile, forward of the windlass, each busy with his thoughts. What Breen's were, Dick could not guess; his own were tinged at first with jealous

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satisfaction that he was hated because of Mabel's interest in him; then he thought wholly of her — the splendid, womanly girl, who could so strangely influence them both — who had held his heart through the years of absence, and who could dominate this strong man at his side; then he thought, with growing appreciation, of the rare character of this man, who, sensitive and sore, hating him, could yet risk life and liberty in his behalf — and do it cheerfully. Would he have done as much for Breen? His brain said yes, and his heart said no. The comparison forced upon him another query: Which was worthiest of this girl? and his head alone answered: —

"He is a gentleman: I throw pea soup at a darkey and run."

Faintly over the washing of the sea alongside, and the soughing of the wind aloft, came the "wheese, wheech" of the cook sharpening his knife, and Breen aroused himself with a shiver.

"Next time you douse him, drown him. Hold his head in it."

Which goes to show that a gentleman, firmly established, may make occasional excursions — and Dick understood.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

AT eight bells Mr. Thorpe resumed charge of his watch; and, as Sawyer had proven himself a capable officer, he was transferred to the port watch under Mr. Thorpe, while the second mate went back to the starboard watch. This promised to relieve Dick of a good share of abuse from Pig, but promised additional trouble for Breen, who already had earned the personal dislike of the captain and carpenter, and now must bear with a watch officer who disapproved of him.

But Dick found that the tall, mild-eyed, good-looking first mate was a past master of an art in which Pig was a bungling beginner. While this broad-shouldered and heavy-fisted young ruffian would balk at no foul word or epithet, and with undoubted courage would assault the men, singly or collectively, on the slightest provocation, Mr. Thorpe, standing still in one spot, with his best arm in a sling and only a belaying-pin in his boot to emphasize his remarks, did more, in the eight to twelve watch that night, to lessen Dick's self-esteem, than had any other influence which had come into his life. The mate's orders were correct — loudly spoken when necessary, soft as a

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mother's murmur when the men were near; but there was vitriol in the tone, and menace in the slight dropping of his left shoulder and stiffening of the arm toward the implement in his boot. Yet it was not this — not these physical and visible manifestations of power — which could be met with like manifestations more or less successfully; it was the colossal egotism of the man — the innate and aggressive belief in himself, in his sacredness and necessity to the world; it was his supreme contempt for these animals whom he was forced to oversee, a contempt which seemed to find expression in resentment that they bore the shape of human beings, and dared to think, speak, and suffer in a human way. He used but little profanity, and only once had recourse to the belaying-pin — when Winskel, the Russian, unwittingly passed to windward of him. For this breach of nautical etiquette he felled him senseless — prone upon his back. Then he calmly stepped upon his throat as he walked forward a few paces to order Wagner to go aloft to the mizzen royal. Winskel had taken the shortest road to the rigging, but Wagner was better-bred, and made a detour to leeward. Dick escaped individual attention that watch, but went to his bunk at eight bells wondering dimly if he was or was not Dick Halpin, seaman gunner — cock-of-the-walk in the old *Vermont*. He was certainly being judged by stand-

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ards unknown to him, and condemned by this judgment.

At four in the morning, under the topgallant forecastle, Breen, in a choking rage, informed him that he had successfully run the gauntlet of the sleeping first and third mates and the steward, only to find the door between the forward and after cabin locked from the captain's side. Then, on his way out, he had been seen by the wakeful steward, who arose from his berth, followed him, and bore witness to Mr. Jones on the poop that he had caught him stealing the officers' night lunch from the cabin table. Whereupon Mr. Jones had called him aft and forcefully rebuked him.

"Still," said Breen, as he rubbed his sore spots, "it's better that the steward thought I was after the lunch. I'll try again. All I want is one gun and the drop. I'm sorry now that I didn't hold to my wheel. It would be easy some quiet night to leave it and run down the after companion."

"I could do that," answered Dick, eagerly; "but so far," he added dubiously, "the first mate hasn't left the poop. Sawyer attends to everything forward."

"You would go down, search the skipper's room, and secure his pistols, would you not?"

"Why — yes."

"I would necessarily be forward, perhaps asleep.

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You would not have time to finish the search and take your wheel again — the ship would come up or fall off and you would be discovered, even though you succeeded in finding the guns. You would have to shoot your way forward to waken me. You would have to drop the first and third mate — for Sawyer is conscientious, — you would waken the skipper with the noise, and you would have to drop him, too. Though the steward would be an easy problem, forward are the carpenter and cook, besides the watch on deck. Good luck might carry you through, but — how often must I remind you of your status under the law — of your proximity to the gallows? If you failed to reach me with shots enough left in the pistols to finish the job and overawe the crew, you would go in irons, if you were not killed; and unless I repeated the feat and succeeded where you failed, I could not save you. You are a sailor before the mast, and the law of your country has placed a halter around your neck, only waiting for action on your part to draw tight the knot — and hang you."

"But why — how," asked the puzzled Dick; "how would it be different if you tried it and failed? You would go in irons, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, but I am a commissioned officer of the United States navy. I could convince any consul, or commissioner, and save myself, though I

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cannot convince ignorant brutes like these. But it does not follow that I could save you. Both in the navy and in the merchant marine a sailor is denied the right of self-defence: more certainly is he denied the right to take the initiative in assault. No, Billson, you leave this to me. When I get the drop, do as I tell you, and you will be safe."

He went below; and until coffee time Dick paced the deck apart from his watchmates, wondering at this new phase of class distinction — half inclined to doubt Breen's premises. But his intense earnestness, and evident acquaintance with maritime law, with the dominating egotism of that tall man on the poop, finally decided the point for him. The mate would not so dispassionately have felled him unless sure of his ground: the ensign would not so strongly insist on caution unless sure of the law and its workings. He had been willing to admit the intellectual and social superiority of Breen, and was now compelled to admit his legal advantage over him. Was it from fault of his own? No, he had expended every energy in his being to make himself what he was — to transform the weak and undersized schoolboy to a trained seaman of the navy. But he was of value only in the navy. It had been energy misdirected; and though it was not his fault, the remedy lay in his own hands. Again he experi-

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enced the fever of ambition that had fired his soul when he walked out the country road to Mr. Bronson's farm, and later, when resolved to quit the navy. Nothing but a war with another naval power would give him a chance for a commission, and war was far away from the United States. He must quit the sea, live on land, and learn something not included in the tutelage of a seaman apprentice. But to quit the sea he must safely finish this passage; and to do so required that he exercise self-control and moderation of speech and manner. He must follow the good advice of Breen, who knew all that he must learn to make himself a gentleman, but who, probably, never had thrashed an enemy in his life.

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CHAPTER XXXV

IN this frame of mind he went to the galley door to get the coffee when, at three bells, the cook's rasping voice had apprised the watch that it was ready. Perhaps it was because Dick was the nearest man to the galley that the cook placed the coffee-pot on the brick flooring far enough from the door to compel a man reaching for it to step over the sill. Perhaps it was accidental. Dick entered the galley bodily, one foot following the other over the sill, and as he stooped for the coffee-pot he heard a snarl from the cook at the stove amidships, and: "Get out o' my galley, you no-'count trash. Wha' you come in my galley fo'?" Then he received on his breast and shoulders the contents of a half-gallon pot which had rested on the stove convenient to the cook's hand when he entered. It was boiling hot salt water, and a little of it splashed his cheek.

With a furious cry of pain and rage he shrunk back, then — ethical distinctions flown to the winds — bounded across the galley after the cook, who picked up his knife on the way and retreated, still cursing, to the other door. Here Dick caught him; he wrenched the knife from his hands and tossed

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it away; then, frantic with pain, he gripped the black throat and squeezed to silence the vindictive voice — and remembered himself. He must not kill. Then came the thought that in this passion he had seen no red, and again he gave rein to his rage; but he simply held the inert cook by the collar, and with his free fist pounded his face until it lost most of its human characteristics. He was interrupted by Sawyer, who caught his hand.

"What for, Billson?" he asked.

"Scalded me," answered Dick, choking with pain. "Scalded me for stepping into the galley after the coffee. Feel my shirt — it's hot yet."

Sawyer investigated.

"You'll be all of a blister. Let go the nigger. Get some paint oil out o' the locker, and rub yerself. I'll see the old man and tell him 'bout this business when he turns out."

The negro sputtered a parting threat at Dick as he slunk to his stove, and Sawyer supported Dick to the forecastle, for he was still weak from the loss of blood he had suffered the day before. Here his watchmates, who had secured the coffee, assisted in removing his shirt and anointing his blistered shoulders with oil. He did not replace the shirt, for, though the oil relieved the smarting, still there was enough of agony in the mere pressure of a passing breath of air to make him wish for death itself, rather than suffer contact with harsh flannel.

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He sat on a chest and drank his coffee, and when the others had filed out to begin washing down the deck he still sat there, waiting for the captain to turn out, when, in humanity's name alone, he could expect relief from the medicine chest. But he reckoned without Mr. Thorpe, who appeared at the door just after four bells had struck.

"Your wheel?" he asked in a quiet voice.

"Yes, sir," answered Dick, as evenly as was possible.

"Come out and take it. You're too fond of this forecastle. It's harder to get you out to your work than to run the ship. I've given you time enough to fix yourself up. Now, out o' this."

"All right, sir," said Dick, standing up and reaching for his shirt. He was a pitiable object, with his haggard face contracted in pain and his naked, blistered shoulders shivering with cold and the agony of each movement; but there was no pity in the mild, blue eyes looking at him, and he knew better than to appeal. He drew the shirt over his head and adjusted it, while involuntary wheezing groans burst through his tightly locked teeth.

"That's a little man," sneered the mate. "Now, don't cry this time, and next voyage you must bring your mamma to sea with you. Put on your little coat and your little cap, and come along."

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And thus was Dick taught the standard of fortitude required of the American merchant sailor. He did not assimilate the lesson at once — he was suffering too much, but as he steered his trick in bodily torment, enough of a dogged, helpless fury entered his soul to prevent his asking the captain for remedies. And when the captain, ill-humoured before his breakfast, contemptuously stared him over in response to Sawyer's earnest explanation of the case, and remarked: "Steerin' all right, ain't he? Able to work? What more does he want?" he was glad that he had not asked, and was bitterly content.

He recovered as he could, while the *Mary Earl* traversed the first long leg of the zigzag which sailing craft steer going south, and, turning the corner, caught the southeast trade and sailed over toward the South American coast. But even while still a fit subject for a hospital, he was not immune from further ill-treatment from his superiors. Sawyer never raised his hand, and seldom his voice, in dealing with the men, and found no trouble in being understood and obeyed; but each man of the crew, on an average of twice a week, suffered contact with Mr. Jones's fists or boots, or from the left-handed use of Mr. Thorpe's belaying-pin, and listened daily to Captain Bilker's profanely expressed bad opinion of them. Pig kicked Dick enthusiastically at first, then confi-

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dently and carelessly; and one day, having knocked him down, looked at him with an expression on his dull face born of an idea struggling into his brain.

"Great heavens," he said, "but ye can't be Redhead Halpin. That boy could fight a little bit."

"No," mused Dick, when safely out of range; "I'm not. Perhaps I never shall be again."

Three times Breen reported failure to enter the after-cabin before finally giving up the plan; and almost daily he reported some brutal happening of the night before, or some bungling mistake on Pig's part which had aroused the captain and brought down his wrath.

"By all signs, Dick" — he had lately begun calling him thus — "he'll not last long as second mate. There may be a vacancy there. Sawyer'll be second mate, but the skipper may want a third mate."

"Perhaps not. The ship sailed without one, and Sawyer only got aft because the mate was laid up. But if Pig comes forward, is there any reason why I shouldn't take him down a little farther?"

"None — except that it would call attention to your powers as a scrapper. If the skipper really wanted a third mate, and we were sure of it, you might win the promotion by your fists, as I under-

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stand that is the usual way. But even then you couldn't get into the after-cabin. No, let Pig alone until I get hold of a gun, or we resolve on a forlorn hope with handspikes. You're a well-licked, self-contained scrapper now — just the man to depend upon when the time comes."

"As a last resort," said Dick thoughtfully, "I suppose we might, kindly and mercifully, disable the steward some night."

"I wouldn't hesitate — I'm hanged if I would, — only, the little man never comes forward of the galley door after dark. How is your friend Chips coming on?"

"Good — or rather, bad. I think the tension is unsettling him. He called me into his shop the other day and showed me his nice sharp broad-axe. He's using his whetstone on it now, and it'll cut a hair. He says the cook sharpens his knife all night, and it keeps him awake."

"That's bad. I've no particular love for him; but I don't like the idea of engineering a man out of his sanity; and yet — I'm a cold-blooded egotist where my own sanity is concerned. I sometimes fear for myself. Ever see red now?"

"Not a bit," answered Dick. "I'm getting that much good out of this."

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CHAPTER XXXVI

IT was the last dog-watch, the only time in the twenty-four hours when both watches were at leisure, and Dick Halpin and Ensign Breen dared to converse openly.

They were walking up and down near the fore hatch. In the alley between the forward house and the weather rail the watch on deck was gathered in groups, while the watch below passed in and out of their own forecastle, their voices rising in disconnected murmurs over the rush of the wind through the rigging and the swash of the sea. The cold night of the southern winter had fallen, and in the northwest a half moon shone brightly, illumining between the obscurations of racing clouds every detail of the deck and top-hamper, but, when hidden, throwing the whole fabric into shadow blacker from the contrast. Out of the darkness at such a moment came the tall figure of the carpenter, who peered into their faces.

"Hist, lad," he said cautiously to Dick. "Come awa'. Come wi' me a bit."

He led him over to the rail, and lowering his mouth to his ear whispered: "To-night's the night."

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"To-night," repeated Dick. "The night for what?"

"To-night's the night," said Chips, impressively. "It's been a-tellin' me all the day. To-night, at eight bells i' the last dog-watch, he'll have his knife sharp enough to suit him."

"What — who's been telling you? What do you mean, Chips?"

"The voice — the wee bit voice in my ear, lad. D'ye no hear it yersel'? Hear it noo? 'Eight bells i' the last dog-watch.' He's at it noo. Hear him — a-grindin' and a-scrapin' wi' his butcher's steel. And he's gettin' nought but a wire eedge — nought but a wire eedge. And he don't know, the loon; he don't know."

The carpenter chuckled; and Dick listened, but heard no sound of knife sharpening.

"He don't know," continued Chips. "But you do, lad. Saw ye ever the like of such an eedge as I ha' put on the broadaxe! And he's nought but a wire eedge on his bit o' pot metal." And again the carpenter chuckled joyously. Then he bolted aft in the darkness, and Dick returned thoughtfully to Breen at the hatch.

"He hears voices," he said; "and he hears the cook sharpening his knife; but I couldn't. He's half crazy. I haven't heard that knife sharpening since he scalded me."

"Nor I. No doubt you discouraged him. He

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would cheerfully knife you if he dared, but as I said, he is a poltroon from his wool down. And Chips is safe enough if he only knew it."

"Chips must have been a little touched before it began. Otherwise, why don't I hear voices? We're in the same boat."

"Difference of age, temperament, and brand of lunacy. You were a little touched, too, and I'm catching it. What cures one man kills another. There goes eight bells."

The tinkle of the bell sounded at the wheel, and Breen stepped toward the large bell at the foremast to repeat the strokes. Before he could do so, a hoarse, blood-freezing shriek rang out from the lee galley door, and, amid startled exclamations of jostled men, the carpenter's voice followed with: "Help! Help! Murder!" Then he sprang around the corner of the house and mounted the fore hatch.

"Shut up that noise forrard, there," shouted Mr. Jones from the poop. "Strike eight bells. What's the matter?"

Breen struck the bell, and the watch below, already out of the forecastle, followed the carpenter, while the others from the weather alley trooped forward. The moon, suddenly appearing from behind a cloud, illumined their wondering faces and the distorted features of the carpenter on the hatch. He stood with arms raised over

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his head, eyes blazing, and lips drawn tightly over his teeth, while incoherent growls came from his throat.

"Hold him!" he screamed at last. "Hold the black cutthroat. Take awa' the knife — the knife — the knife. It has a wire eedge."

"It's all right, Chips," called Dick, advancing toward him. "The cook isn't there."

The carpenter turned, glared at him, and shrank away from him.

"Back, ye murderin' de'il," he roared. "Back wi' ye. Ha' ye no done enough?"

He bounded down to leeward, turned sharply, and rushed through the group of men, scattering them right and left. Aft he went, yelling ceaselessly, meeting Mr. Jones at the mainmast and upsetting him. He mounted the poop steps in two bounds, sped along the alley, and the crew, crowding aft, saw him poised for an instant on the taffrail. Then, with a long, mournful wail echoing from his lips, he disappeared from sight just as the moon hid behind a cloud.

"Man overboard!" sang out the helmsman. "Man overboard!"

"Put yer wheel down," roared Mr. Jones from amidships. "All hands forrard there. Stand by braces fore and aft. Clear away that lee quarter boat. Hard down yer wheel. Hard down."

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"Hard down, sir," answered the man at the wheel. "Hard down it is."

Men scattered to stations for tacking ship, and Mr. Jones hurried aft, while the ship came slowly up to the wind. Dick was one of the jib-sheet men, and he mounted the forecastle deck, where, as going about on the other tack was obviously unnecessary, he expected to do nothing; but a thundering voice — louder than Pig's — from the poop changed the prospect. The captain was on deck.

"Hard up that wheel — quick!" roared the voice. "Clap on to them weather jib sheets forrard there. Trim over to windward. Forrard all hands o' ye. Stand by weather forebraces. Oh!" — and the roaring voice took on a note of distress — "Oh — oh, you d—d two-ends-an'-the-bight-of-a-poor-fool, just look at my ship now! Look at her! Let go to looward! Haul 'round them foreyards! 'Round wi' 'em! Box this ship back 'fore the spars go! Get forrard out o' this, you infernal lunkhead! Get out o' my sight!"

Mr. Jones, saying nothing in reply, headed the rush of men to the forebraces; but it was too late. They had not bent the heavy weather canvas needed in those latitudes, and the old, patched-up rags aloft could not stand the shaking they were receiving. Royals went first, then topgallantsails and topsails, and before the ship,

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under the influence of the backed foreyards and the still intact lower foretopsail, had begun to swing back, nearly every sail aloft, as well as the two outer jibs, was in ribbons. Then came in the order: "Swing the foreyards and trim over-head sheets." Dick, at the forebraces, heard Sawyer, aft near the quarter boat, say: "Then ye won't get a boat over, sir?"

"Boat over?" yelled the captain. "Boat over —for a man crazy enough to jump? Not for the best man aboard. Let them gripes alone an' 'tend to yer work forrard."

"Aye, aye, sir." And Sawyer joined the others.

All hands remained on deck that night, sending aloft and bending canvas. It was work that needed light, and lanterns were lit. One of these, shining in through the galley door for a moment, disclosed to the man carrying it the body of the cook, stretched out face down on the galley floor, with the carpenter's broadaxe buried in his head. He had been struck from behind.

Later investigation disclosed the carving knife in its place in the rack on the bulkhead, in company with the steel, fork, and long spoons used in cooking. It was no sharper than it ought to have been.

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CHAPTER XXXVII

IT was Dick's wheel from six to eight next morning, and when four bells had struck, he went to take it, noticing, in the gathering light, the body of the cook on the mizzen hatch, and Mr. Jones busy with the last stitches in its canvas shroud. As he steered his trick, he marvelled at the unofficerlike character of the work, then remembered that through the night he had not once heard the voice of the second mate; but it was not until seven bells had struck that his guess was confirmed. The captain came up the after companion with a Bible in his hand, and stepped forward to the break of the poop, while the crew, at Sawyer's call, mustered aft to the mizzen hatch. Dick, at the wheel, could see nothing but the tall figure of the captain, and could hear little but his voice. He laid the Book on the monkey-rail, and began.

"Men," he said solemnly, "we're mustered here to give the cook a send-off 'cordin' to rule — not as how I can see as it's goin' to do him any good — it seems to me that if prayin' could do him any good, it oughter have come 'long 'fore he died. Same with the carpenter, who's some miles astern

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now. Just the same, I'll read the sarvice for both of 'em, and which ever of 'em it fits the best, why, I suppose, will get it. First thing, though, before we get rid o' the cook, we'll fill his place." Dick pricked up his ears.

"Now, you, there," continued the captain, "you big-headed, bull-headed, fool-headed lobster, that thinks he's a second mate, you get into that room o' yours, and you get your duds out of it and into the cook's room, while I'm lookin' at you. You hear? Not a word! You're cook o' this ship from now on, or you go in irons in the 'tween deck. What d'ye say now?"

The captain drew a revolver from his pocket, and placed it upon the Bible. Dick heard muffled words from the main deck, but nothing intelligible. Then he saw the captain replace the pistol in his pocket. "That's sensible," he continued. "Let's see you keep it up. Go in there, one o' you, and give him a hand with his chest."

Captain Bilker began pacing the poop, and ten minutes went by before he spoke again; then he advanced to the rail, opened the Book, paused while he took off his hat and jammed it into his coat pocket, and read a chapter chosen at random. Finishing, he closed the Book, put on his hat, and waved his hand to those below.

"Over with him," he said, and then stepped to the rail.

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One end of the canvas sack circled into view over the edge of the poop, as the body shot through the gangway, and Dick heard the splash. The cook's funeral was over.

"Gawd," said the captain, peering over the side. "Reg'lar belly-gut dive."

Whether it was this remark, the grisly incongruity of the whole proceeding, or a sort of hysteria coming after his night of fatigue, with an unsuspected sense of relief at the removal of Pig's and the cook's menace as a prompting agency, that brought it on, Dick never could determine. He began to laugh, softly but unconstrainedly; and when Captain Bilker came aft, Bible in hand, and glared reprovingly at him, he still continued.

"What's the matter wi' you?" he demanded.

"N-n-nothing, sir," answered Dick, flushing.

"Yes, there is somethin', I tell yer. Somethin' up yer sleeve, damn ye," stormed the captain. "And I'm dead on to you, my fo'castle lawyer. You're slick, but I'm slicker. You grin in my face, will yer? I'll see 'f my first mate ain't right, after all. Mr. Thorpe," he bawled forward, "call all hands aft again." Then he returned to the break of the poop, and Dick, sober of face now, with no inclination to laughter, bore the malevolent glances of the insulted autocrat, as he paced back and forth while waiting for the men.

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The starboard watch trooped out of the forecastle from their interrupted breakfast, and joined the others on their way aft. The captain looked down on them.

"I've given you men a good long time to produce the one that broke Mr. Thorpe's arm," he said. "Time's up. Pass him out at once, or back ye go to yer first grub."

Dick heard an indistinct voice answering, and then, from the captain: —

"Ye'll tell me on the poop, hey? What's the matter wi' tellin' where ye are? Hey? All right. Come up here, then, and no games."

Smith, the cockney, arose to Dick's view on the steps, and his voice became intelligible.

"Hi've talked to hall 'ands forrard, sir, hand we're hall hagreed, though that's not syin' we can prove hit, sir. But hall of hus think has 'ow it was the man you took haft has a hofficer. He was quick to deny hit forrard, sir, but he was just has quick to swear hit wasn't Billson, when the mate thought hit was. He knowed who hit was, sir; hit was 'isself, hand hall 'ands thinks so, sir."

"That'll do. Get down off the poop," said the captain. "Mr. Sawyer," he called, "step up here."

Smith went down, and Sawyer soon appeared, following Captain Bilker aft through the alley.

"Mr. Sawyer," said the latter, facing him, "the men accuse you of bein' the man who broke into

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the mate's room first night out. I've made you second mate, and so far, I've no fault to find wi' you; but I want this settled. Did you? Or was it this man here? I want the truth, now."

Sawyer looked at Dick, and there was the barest suspicion of a wink in his humorous eye; then he looked gravely and respectfully into the captain's face.

"It was me, cap'n," he answered.

"You, was it? And why didn't you own up to it?"

"Didn't want to get shot or thumped. I was 'fore the mast then, cap'n. You've made me an officer, and I'm much obliged for the favour; but just the same it makes a mighty sight o' difference if anything happens to me this v'yage. As man to man I'm not afraid o' Mr. Thorpe now."

"But what were you after? What did you want in his room?"

"Haven't the slightest idea, sir; I was drunk enough for anythin', but not too drunk to fight, and remember what happened. He struck at me, and I twisted his arm. Now, cap'n, you can put me forrard again, and take Mr. Jones, or any one else, aft in my place; but, remember, if anything happens to me, I'm an officer."

"Can you square yerself wi' Mr. Thorpe?"

"Don't care a rap, cap'n, whether I can or not. I'm second mate — he's only first. He ran foul o'

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me on deck that first night, and things are kinder square as they are."

Captain Bilker walked over to the weather-rail, and stared to windward, and Sawyer improved the occasion by winking solemnly and warningly at the amazed Dick. Then the captain returned.

"If I send you forrard I'll have to take that swine back again; and I don't want him — he's more at home in the galley, where he put in his first voyage. But if I keep you aft, how'll you get on wi' the men? How'll you get on wi' the mate?"

"Easy enough, sir. The men'll be much obliged to me for gettin' them full an' plenty, as you promised 'em, sir. Keep me aft and they'll do as I tell 'em, just as they have been doin'. Put me forrard, and I'll thump the last man of 'em for givin' me away. Keep me aft, and I'll take the mate's orders, do my work, and know my place; but if he runs foul o' me, I'll break his left arm as easy as I did his right."

Captain Bilker paced a few turns from rail to rail, then said: —

"All right. Settle it wi' the mate. I'll talk it over with him myself. Send the watch to breakfast."

Sawyer went forward, and the captain turned fiercely on Dick.

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"What the h—l you laughin' at just now?" he demanded.

"At the way the cook went over, sir, and at what you said," answered Dick, suddenly realizing that nothing was so good as the truth.

Captain Bilker studied him from his head to his feet, and with a half snort, half grunt, went down to his breakfast.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

BEYOND that comprehensive wink to Dick at the wheel, Sawyer offered no explanation of his vicarious confession, and the two friends reasoned that, secure in his advantage, he had done it out of the goodness of his heart, not only to relieve Dick, and possibly Breen, from suspicion, but to throw the captain back upon his promise and secure better food for the men. The latter result was attained, for Captain Bilker, loudly proclaiming himself a man of his word, ordered the steward to give them "full and plenty" — which meant the addition to the government allowance of a few of the substitutes and an additional quart of water *per diem*.

What difference, if any, Sawyer's confession made in his relations with Mr. Thorpe never became known in the forecastle. Work went on without apparent friction between the two, and much more smoothly as regarded the men. It was as if the tragic deaths of the cook and carpenter had exercised a humanizing effect on Mr. Thorpe; for, though his tongue was as bitter as ever, he rarely raised his belaying-pin from his boot. As for Pig, the full measure of his disgrace

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hardly seemed to come home to him. As cook he could secure for himself as good food as was served in the cabin; his berth was as comfortable, and his duties were easier. After a few days of moroseness and surliness, he settled into an apathetic, porcine indifference, from which he aroused himself only to growl curses on Dick's head when he passed the galley door. Dick heard them, and asked Breen's permission to silence them.

"No!" snapped Breen; "you're to keep out of trouble. Great heavens!" he exclaimed passionately, "what have I done to be compelled to suffer like this?" He had been all day at a washtub, and his knuckles were sore.

"But," answered Dick, gently, "why need you? It is much easier for me to bear it than for you. There are only two aft now — for Sawyer doesn't count, provided we succeed — and one is crippled. Why not — you and I — sneak aft in my watch some night, floor the mate, gag him, go down and fix the skipper, and get his pistols and gun. Then we'll have charge."

"Yes, we might. I've talked bravely enough about it, and yet — call it cowardice if you like; but I don't say that I wouldn't on impulse — you see, some one would be killed, surely. Some of the men, perhaps, who wouldn't understand. I know that I should be exonerated, and yet I hesitate at bloodshed. If it were in time of war I should

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drive ahead. War excuses killing, even to a man's own conscience. I had really hoped, that in case of a vacancy in the galley — which I confess now I didn't wish for — I should be made cabin flunkey, or something of that sort, while the steward cooked for all hands. Now I am stalled again."

"I've a good mind," said Dick, slowly and thoughtfully, "to take this upon myself. There is a difference of training, perhaps temperament, between us, and I have none of your scruples. I can overcome them both in three minutes — one after the other. Then I can arm myself in two minutes, at least. Five minutes work will do it."

"And hang you."

"But why?" asked Dick, vehemently. "I am the government's hired man. My government has trained me to fight. I am taken forcibly from my job, and I fight as I have been taught, to get back to my work. Why should my government hang me?"

"Because certain legal gentlemen would conceive it their duty to arrange it," answered Breen, wearily. "We need not argue this question. If you fall back upon your relation to your government, I fall back upon mine. As your officer, I forbid you to assault any one aboard this ship until I take the initiative and so direct you. I also order you to report to me twenty-four hours

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hence any plan you may be able to think of which will give me possession of arms without previous friction. I will think also. My duties now are light and conducive to thought. I am the skipper's laundryman. I have washed his shirts to-day; to-morrow I expect to have his socks."

Dick pondered through the middle watch on the ensign's new attitude, but not until he had rolled into his bunk at four in the morning had he brought the problem to a satisfactory solution.

"Breen's a gentleman, to begin with," he mused. "As a gentleman, he regards fighting, knock-downs, and such things as ungentlemanly unless in behalf of others, or for a principle removed from his own private interests. I wish Pig had stayed home, so that I could have settled things before getting these notions. And yet, Breen isn't always this way. He feels like murder, sometimes. Well — not so often as I do; he's on that side of the fence — and I'm on the other. He's a gentleman, and I'm not. I wonder if I can be — for her — I wonder if I can forgive Pig — "

Then he went to sleep, to waken at seven bells at peace with himself and with Pig — serenely confident in his sleep-born loftiness of purpose. As was customary with him, fresh from the navy, he was first on his feet; and he started toward the

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galley to get the breakfast with more of good humour in his face than had shown there lately; but, in half a minute from the time that he stepped through the forecastle door, his new-found philosophy was shocked out of him. First he heard his name called, and observed Breen, his hands full of brass-rags, running down the poop steps. The watch was scattered about, some swabbing paintwork, others, like Breen, scouring brass. Each face was turned forward, each pair of eyes focussed on a point abaft the forward house. Dick hastened around the corner just as Breen called again.

"Take a hand in that, Halpin."

Forward of the main hatch, flat on his back and black in the face, was Sawyer. His eyes were bulging, his tongue protruding, the lower part of his body wriggling feebly. Kneeling on his chest was the cause of it all — Pig Jones. His left fingers gripped Sawyer's throat, and his right, doubled into a fist the size of a sledge-hammer, was doing the work of a hammer on Sawyer's face.

"Think, do ye," said Pig between blows, "yer goin' to run me 'cause ye've got my berth. I'll learn ye."

It was no time to consider ethics or philosophy, even though Dick had not received orders from Breen. Sawyer, a good friend, was being mur-

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dered by a giant ignorant of his strength, innocent of murderous intent, perhaps — bent only upon "learning" his victim. Dick's boot, impacting on Pig's jaw, stopped the tutelage. It was a kick that would have broken an ordinary jaw, but Pig's was not an ordinary jaw, and it held together; yet he was driven off from Sawyer's chest by the force of the kick, and he scrambled to his feet six feet away.

"Defend yourself, Halpin," called Breen, and Dick, watching Pig closely, observed, out of the corner of his eye, Sawyer rising weakly to his feet, with Breen and others around him.

"You — you — you — kick me," spluttered Pig. "You — Halpin, hey? I knew ye."

"Right," said Dick, calmly; "Redhead Halpin. You got only one back, Pig Jones. There are more kicks coming to you." Then he dodged the bull-like rush of the giant and struck him lightly in the ribs as he passed.

There is no need to describe in technical detail the fight that followed — the fiercest battle with fists that Dick had ever engaged in. It raged and whirled from the main hatch to the break of the poop, forward again, then aft. Pig bellowed and threatened insanely, expending his strength in futile blows and rushes. Dick was merely himself again — not the self which had formulated plans of inward discipline and forgiven Pig, but the self

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which remembered the persecutions of Pig as man and boy. He was a paleolithic reversion plus the education of the modern seaman apprentice. Fired by an ecstasy of pride and courage, he would not now have exchanged his characteristics for those of Breen — not even for the power to win the girl that he loved. He fought with his hands, and he fought to win, but in his greatest intensity of feeling, he saw no red.

He noticed, as he struck and feinted, dodged and whirled, that men followed them, but avoided contact, even though some held handspikes poised aloft. Once he heard a clarion voice over their exclamations:—

"Let them alone, Mr. Thorpe. Stand back there, Mr. Sawyer. He's doing well. Let 'em have it out."

And he fought on, caring little for the sympathy in the voice or for the poised handspikes, until, breathing hard, and dizzy with the shock of interruption, he found himself held tightly by Sawyer and the captain, and looking down at his quivering, unconscious antagonist.

"That'll do, young man," said the captain. "You've licked him fair. Don't spoil it."

"Come forrard, Billson," said Sawyer. "Get yer breakfast." The captain released his arm, and Sawyer led him away.

"Ye came just in time to save my wind, Bill-

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son," he said, "and I'll not forget it. I didn't think you could do him, and I was ready with a club. Glad now, on your account, I didn't use it, but sorry on mine. Why, the brute struck me from behind just 'cause I'd objected, five minutes before, to his spattering slops on the deck."

"My name's Halpin, Mr. Sawyer," panted Dick. "That fellow's an old school-time enemy, and I suppressed my name and identity only to avoid this. Now that it's over, it doesn't matter — and say, the skipper seemed to be on my side. Can't we convince him about Mr. Breen?"

"Not on your life," said Sawyer, warningly. "Don't think of it. Too much has happened. And I'll tell you somethin'. The skipper's suspectin'. I heard him an' the mate only yesterday talkin' about your friend Breen. You see he can't, in the nature o' things, keep himself back altogether. The sailor sticks out of him, an' the skipper's catchin' on. Now, that's bad for him in this kind of a ship. An' only this mornin' the old man asked me what I thought about him — whether I thought he was anythin' more than what he made out, and I said that as far as I could see he was the most useless, good-for-nothin' soger that ever signed able seaman. But it didn't go — I could see that. Give him a pointer to watch out. So long, now. I've talked enough wi' you."

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CHAPTER XXXIX

BEFORE Dick reached the forecastle, whither his watch had preceded him, he heard loud and violent language from the captain, and turned to look aft. Pig was sitting up on the hatch, but was receiving no attention from any one. It was Breen who was being rebuked. He had climbed the poop steps and had begun to rub the brass plate on the monkey-rail, and over him stood Captain Bilker, wiping his hands and coat sleeve with a handkerchief. As Breen seemed in no present danger of assault, and as there was not much time left for breakfast, Dick entered the forecastle, concluding that Breen, in his hurry to relieve Sawyer's predicament, had left the brass smeared with oil and bath brick, and that Captain Bilker had rubbed against it. This proved to be the case. When Dick came out at eight bells, Breen was stowing his box of oils and rags in its place under the topgallant forecastle, and Mr. Thorpe, who had come forward to set the men at work for the watch, was further berating him.

"You get your breakfast, and at one bell you turn to — d'ye hear? And next time you leave any oil around loose, you'll lick it up."

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Then he detailed the port watch to various tasks about the rigging, Dick's being the squaring of ratlines on the weather mizzen shrouds.

"And take a piece o' twine with you," said the officer, "and go up first thing and overhaul and stop the royal and to'gallant buntlines."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Dick, and headed for the "bosun's-locker."

There being no boys or ordinary seamen in the crew, this lofty work was given to Dick and other young and active men, while scouring brass, swabbing, scrubbing, sweeping, and all unseamanly work usually done by boys was given to Breen and others as useless as he pretended to be. Musing on the injustice of keeping Breen up in the forenoon watch for an act which indirectly saved the life of an officer, Dick secured the twine, with the marline-spike and marline for the ratlines, and went aft. On the way, he met Pig stumbling slowly forward to his galley. His eyes were closed and blackened; his face was marked and bruised. He was a ludicrous and pathetic picture of misery, and Dick was sorry for him. Mr. Thorpe was out of sight, and the captain had gone below. He stopped before him.

"Pig," he said, "I didn't mean to do so much. I'd made my mind up to drop all grudge and call the whole thing square, but you forced me to it. Will you shake hands and start fresh?" Dick

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extended his hand; but Pig, lifting his chin to see easier through his swollen eyelids, tersely consigned him to the lower regions, and passed on.

"All right," said Dick, and added to himself as he went aft, "Well, I feel better for having offered."

On the mizzen royal yard he saw a sail on the southwestern horizon, squarely on the starboard beam; for the southeast trade having failed, the ship was now headed away for the Cape with a mild quartering wind. Looking down, he beheld the captain pacing the poop and hailed: "Sail, oh! Broad on the starboard beam. Seems to be steering parallel with us, sir."

"All right — all right," answered the captain, reaching for his binoculars; then he looked aloft and called out: "Why in thunder don't ye put it to music and sing it? Don't have so much to say up there."

Dick was long past being hurt by such criticism. He finished stopping the buntlines and came down, noticing, as he passed the topmast-head, that the seizing of the monkey, or signal-gaff, lift was chafed through, and that only a couple of turns held the weight of the gaff. Obviously this was a matter to be reported at once; but not caring to hail the deck again, he descended to the eyes of the lower rigging, where his work on the ratlines would begin, and called

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easily to Mr. Thorpe, who was ascending the poop steps: —

"Seizing of the monkey-gaff lift is all gone, sir," he said. "Shall I go up and fix it?"

But Captain Bilker, not seeing the mate, and supposing that Dick was again addressing him, turned fiercely around and yelled angrily: —

"Don't you be so d—d busy up there wi' your comments and your suggestions to me. I know my business without your help. You 'tend to your'n."

"Go on wi' those ratlines," commanded the mate, consistently deferring to the captain's mood, "and shut up."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Dick, respectfully; then he went to work.

No man can with surety trace to a prompting emotion the moods and whims of an autocrat; but Dick, watching the surly-faced skipper stamping back and forth between the binnacle and the rail, occasionally snarling at the man at the wheel, occasionally peering through the binoculars, shrewdly guessed that the disturbance of bile came of his being compelled to wash his hands twice that morning and to give his coat to the steward for cleaning. In this guess he was confirmed when, at one bell, Breen appeared on deck.

"Mr. Thorpe," yelled the captain as he spied him, "set that infernal insect to work on this

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brass work an' get it done. Them stanchions there. Mebbe he'll know how to scour brass work properly 'fore I'm through with him."

The brass work indicated was a set of stanchions, or braces, at the ends of the poop and house rails, which so far in the voyage had not been cleaned, and had taken on a rusty green and blue colour. Breen secured his box of rags and went to work.

"You gentleman's gentleman," sneered the irate captain as he hovered over him. "You navy officer, you, I'll l'arn you somethin'!"

Breen answered not, but scoured industriously; and Dick, above them in the rigging, speculated on the chances if he should let fly his marline-spike at Captain Bilker's head.

So the forenoon watch passed, the sail to starboard drawing closer, and the captain becoming more and more irritable, until, at about five bells, the other ship ran up an ensign. The captain studied it through the glasses.

"Nothin' but a d—d Nova Scotia rat trap," he remarked; "an' I thought it was an American ship."

It was the first ship that had come within signal distance since they had sailed, and in spite of his disappointment Captain Bilker was naturally anxious to communicate. He looked around the deck. The whole watch was aloft with the exception of Breen.

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"Here, you," he called, "you gentleman's man. Can you read letters stencilled on little flags?"

"Yes, sir," answered Breen, standing erect with the peculiar set look which had come to his face lately.

"Put that gear away, an' clean yer hands an' come aft here an' help me signalize that Bluenoser. Bear a hand, now."

In five minutes Breen was with him.

"Run up this ensign on them signal halyards there," commanded the captain, tossing the stars and stripes to the top of the cabin, where he had already piled the nineteen small flags of the International Signal Code. Then he followed with his signal books and glasses, taking a position forward of the mizzenmast. Breen hoisted the ensign to the monkey gaff, which, as the flag was small and the wind light, held up under the strain.

"Code pennant," muttered the captain, as the stranger's ensign came down and a small triangular flag went up. "Answer that," he said to Breen, kicking a small flag toward him. "Send it up on t'other part o' the halyards." Breen obliged him.

"Now get our number hooked together," said the captain, naming four letters. "They're stamped on the canvas edge. See them? J on top, then the rest."

He opened the code book to interpret the four

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flags now flying from the stranger's gaff, and Breen made up the ship's number.

"*Annie M. Sheldon*, o' Halifax," muttered the skipper. Then he verified Breen's arrangement of the flags before ordering them hoisted.

"You do seem to know somethin', after all," he said sharply.

"More than you do," muttered Dick in the rigging, a little fearful that Breen, unaware of the captain's lately aroused suspicion, would show too great a proficiency at signalling; but he could not warn him now.

The number went aloft, and Captain Bilker jotted down on an envelope the interpretation of three signals which followed in rapid succession from the other.

"Six days out o' Montevideo for Cape Town," he read. Then he directed the hoisting of three sets of flags which told the other ship that they were fifty-seven days out of New York bound to Hong Kong.

"Now that's over," said Captain Bilker, "we'll ask for news. Run up B — W — F."

Breen quickly toggled these flags together and hoisted them, watched closely by the captain.

Four flags answered from the other, and Captain Bilker, observing through the glasses, called out: "C — K — V — R. What the deuce is he drivin' at?"

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He studied his book. "Battle," he announced. "Must be spellin' somethin' out. Run up the answerin' pennant."

Breen picked it up readily. It was the same small flag which he had hoisted first, and had two uses, one to indicate the code used, the other to signify that a signal is understood.

"How d'you know that was the answerin' pennant?" yelled the captain in his ear. "Hey? Tell me. How d'you know so much 'bout these flags?"

"You told me to hoist it, sir," answered Breen, flushing slightly, yet ready with an explanation. "I was valet to a yacht owner once, sir, and I've seen these flags before."

The captain glared at him a moment, then said with a sniff: "I b'lieve yer a-lyin'. Don't you try an' fool me. Up wi' that pennant. What the h—l are ye gapin' at?"

Three other flags were now flying from the Nova Scotiaman, and the captain read: C—L—J. Then he turned to his book.

"Ship," he said. "What on earth does he mean? Answer."

Breen, who had lowered the pennant, again ran it up. He had not unhooked it from the halyards, and the captain noticed it.

"He's a gentleman's man, and a yacht-owner's valet," muttered the captain, as he studied another

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signal from the stranger. "I wonder if he knows what B — Q — K — J means?" Glancing suspiciously at Breen's fixed face, he consulted the book.

"Geographical signal," he said, turning the leaves. "*Maine* — battleship *Maine* — that's what he's saying. What next?"

He read another signal, then another, and another, each following in rapid succession, jotting down the interpretations as he read them in the book. Then he read aloud: "Battleship *Maine* — destroyed — Havana — February 15. Since we sailed!" he added excitedly. "Answer that, and stand by."

He turned the leaves, studied a page, and said, "Run up C — G — M."

"C — G — M, sir?" answered Breen, fumbling the flags as excitedly as Captain Bilker fumbled the leaves of the book. "Did you say, C — G — M, sir, or C — G — N?"

"What'd I tell you," yelled the captain, reopening the book. "Keep yer ears open. C — G — N. That asks if there's any chance o' war. Now up wi' it, now that ye know all 'bout it."

Breen, with sparkling eyes, changed the signal, and Dick overhead mingled wonder as to the fate of his old ship and shipmates with appreciation of Breen's ability to take care of himself.

But the signal did not leave the deck. The

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excited skipper, to hurry matters, had bent the end of the halyards to the loop of the upper flag while Breen changed the lower. He made a slippery hitch, and as Breen hauled on the other part the flags dropped and the end went aloft.

"Ketch it!" shouted the captain to Dick. "Ketch that end 'fore it unreeves."

It was out of Dick's reach, but he danced up the rigging after it. To no avail, however; the higher it went, the lighter it got, and the halyards whizzed through the sheave on the gaff and settled in a tangle on the house and deck. Captain Bilker's rage was akin to insanity.

"Get up there," he screamed to Breen. "Take that end aloft an' reeve it off, you infernal monkey. Don't wait to say yer prayers. Up wi' you!"

Breen answered quietly, took the end and mounted the weather rigging, meeting Dick, who had come down to his work.

"Don't get on that gaff till you seize off the lift," said Dick, softly. "It's chafed through, and he knows it. And he's suspicious of you. Just learned it. Here's a piece of marline."

"You say he knows it?"

"Reported it myself this morning."

"All right."

Breen took the length of marline and went aloft, while Captain Bilker improved the delay by walking back and forth and glaring unspeakable things

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at Dick. He could not but have understood the meaning of the short talk and the transfer of marline, yet when Breen, having reached the monkey gaff at the topmast crosstrees, instead of climbing out on the smooth pole, made fast the end of halyards and climbed to the lift above at the cap, he broke forth into a tirade of profanity.

"Get out an' reeve off them halyards," he roared between oaths. "D'ye hear, up there, you white-livered whelp? What's the matter wi' ye?"

To which Breen, busy at the seizing, made no response. He finished, descended to the gaff, climbed out and rove the halyards, and overhauled the end to the deck. Captain Bilker caught it, and, hitching it to the flags, hoisted the signal, while Breen descended. His face was very pale as he passed Dick in the rigging, and he said:—

"That lift wouldn't have held the weight of a poodle dog. He was willing I should fall."

As Breen reached the deck the captain was jotting down a reading of a new signal, obviously too engrossed now to punish Breen. "Up wi' the answerin' pennant," he said, and watched the signals through the glasses. Then he seized the book and turned the leaves.

"America," he muttered. "War expected between America and — what next?"

Again he peered through the glasses.

"Up wi' that pennant again," he said, over his

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shoulder, and Breen, who had abstracted an iron belaying-pin from the fife-rail, tucked it into his belt and obeyed. The captain consulted the book.

"D — F — W," he muttered. "What is it? Spanish! War expected between America and Spain," he declared solemnly as he looked up. "Mr. Thorpe," he called to the mate, now on the forecastle deck, "come! — "

"Yes, you murdering devil," interrupted Breen, with the belaying-pin over his shoulder. His face was still white, but his words came forth with a business-like distinctness quite at variance with the gentle speech of the gentleman's man. "And in the name of the United States government I take charge of this ship. Do you surrender, quietly, and instantly, or shall I kill you where you stand?"

"Wha— what? What you say?" stammered the captain, backing away.

"I am a government officer," said Breen, following, his iron club high over his head. "Do you give me charge of this ship?"

"No, by heaven! I'll see you and the gov — "

The heavy iron belaying-pin came down, and the captain fell like a sack of meal.

"Down from aloft, Halpin," called Breen, but Dick was already stepping out of the rigging. "The game is up. Did you hear? The country's expecting war. Don't let the mate into the cabin. Kill him if necessary."

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"Very good, sir," answered Dick, securing another iron club similar to Breen's. The ensign descended the after companion, while Dick vaulted over the monkey-rail and sprang off the poop into the path of Mr. Thorpe, hurrying aft in response to the captain's call.

How easy it was — after the first blow was struck. Dick faced the terrible first mate with a smile on his face and joy in his heart.

"Stop where you are," he said calmly. "Ensign Breen, of the United States navy, has confiscated this ship and orders me to kill you if you make trouble. Understand?"

"Going to kill me, are you? Why? What have I done that I'm to be killed?" Mr. Thorpe backed away, and Dick followed. There was no fear in the face or the voice of the mate, even though he had seen the young man before him thrash the big Pig Jones that morning. But with his arm in a sling he was not at present fighting with fists or against them; neither was he opposing iron belaying-pins. He was simply the signed first officer of this ship, whose life was threatened, and he took the right and proper course of action. With a sudden sidespring he drew a revolver and fired left-handed at Dick; but he missed, and proved that his excellent marksmanship with the marline-spike was merely accidental. Dick rushed toward him, and the officer

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fired again as he retreated. Dick followed on, in a frenzy borne of his danger, risking death because he loved life, seeking only to get at this man who was trying to kill him. Around the booby hatch they manœuvred — around the capstan, back to the poop steps, and forward again until, at the main fife-rail, as the mate paused to fire his fifth shot, a report rang out from the poop, and he whirled around in his tracks with arms extended, reeled, fell, and lay quiet on the deck. Dick turned, and saw the ensign lowering a smoking rifle from his shoulder.

"Down from aloft, everybody," sang out Breen. "Halpin, come here!" Dick approached and received a revolver handed down to him. "Call the second mate — call the watch, forward there!" he added in a voice which the men scrambling down from the rigging had not heard before.

Sawyer appeared; the firing had awakened him. He rubbed his eyes as he looked at the quiet form on the deck amidships; then he looked at Dick, carelessly holding his pistol muzzle down, and at Breen above on the house.

"Sawyer," said Breen, "the United States expects war with Spain, and I've taken charge of this ship as a naval officer. I think I've killed the mate and I think I've killed the skipper. Shall I kill you, too, or will you take orders from me?"

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"Don't kill me, sir," answered Sawyer, with a deprecatory gesture, while the slightest trace of a smile came to his face. "I submit to a show of force. I'll take orders from anybody with a gun. Just tell me what I'm to do, sir."

"Get all hands aft here at once."

"Very good, sir."

The speech which Breen made to the men when they appeared before him was short, sharp, and expressive. In it he stated his position with regard to the government and the law. He granted permission for any and all of them to disbelieve him before his future handling of the ship and themselves convinced them of the truth of his words, but promised instant death to the first man who should act on his disbelief. To which the men, with wonder and shock in their faces, made no response. They shuffled their feet uneasily, looking at each other, at the complaisant second mate, at the stern-faced Dick, and at the sterner-faced young man on the house who had won their regard by his gentleness, politeness, and deference to their superiority. Eight bells at the wheel struck while Breen waited for their answer, and with an impatient gesture he said, "Mr. Sawyer, send two men up here to lift the captain down to the mizzen hatch."

"Very good, sir," answered Sawyer, with a man-of-war's-man's salute. "Wagner — Swanson,

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bear a hand here. Up on the house wi' you and bring the skipper down."

The two men hesitated, looking at each other and around at their shipmates; then they looked up at Breen, slowly bringing his rifle to his shoulder, and started for the steps. Their example seemed to decide the rest; when Sawyer ordered two others to carry the mate to the hatch, they obeyed readily.

The captain was carried down and laid beside the mate; then Breen called out: "Strike eight bells. Dinner, the watch," and the men moved slowly forward. Breen had mastered them.

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CHAPTER XL

NEITHER the captain nor the mate was dead. While Breen, Dick, and Sawyer examined them on the hatch, the mate quivered convulsively, rolled over on his side, and relapsed into half-consciousness. Breen's bullet had glanced from his skull. A little later, Captain Bilker arose to a sitting posture and stared at them with sleepy eyes while he uttered a sound that was half groan, half growl. Breen breathed a deep sigh of relief, and Dick, with his pistol at the captain's head, could yet notice that the ensign was deadly pale, that his hand trembled, and that drops of perspiration collected as fast as he brushed them away.

"I'm glad — it's better — I'm glad, now," he said brokenly, "that I didn't kill them. They both deserve it, of course, but they ought to do it themselves. Mr. Sawyer," he added, "get leg irons out and shackle them together by the ankles, left to right — right to left."

Sawyer disappeared in the cabin, and Captain Bilker, still sitting and regarding them stupidly, still covered by Dick's pistol, broke forth into aimless, senseless abuse. He could not quite

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grasp the situation; but when Sawyer had locked his right ankle to the mate's left, and his left to the mate's right, he was sufficiently awakened to ask irrelevant questions, by which time Breen was sufficiently composed to answer and Mr. Thorpe conscious enough to listen.

"What you doin', anyhow — what you put the darbies on us for?" he asked with a snarl.

"We ironed you," answered Breen, incisively, "to keep you quiet — to restrain you from any futile and intemperate action. You will remain in irons until released by the order of the nearest consul."

"We will, hey? D'ye know this is mutiny? D'ye know I'm captain o' this ship?"

"I know that you were captain; but you are deprived of command by a representative of the United States government. I am a naval officer, as I have unavailingly told you before, and my acts will be upheld by any official you may appeal to. Do you understand that you, and your ship, and your owners, and your combined value to the commerce of America, are of small importance compared with the country's need of her officers and seamen when war threatens? I waive all consideration of your attempt on my life this morning, and rest my case on the fact that you were restraining me from my duty — taking me to sea when I am needed in the navy. So, as

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you are of a troublesome, dissatisfied disposition you will be confined in irons on forecastle rations until we quit this ship."

"How'll you quit — in the middle o' the South Atlantic? Why didn't you make it clear — why didn't you prove yourself, if you belong to the navy. I didn't know."

"Yes, you did, you scoundrel," said Breen, angrily. "You came to that knowledge this morning, when I failed to conceal my acquaintance with signal flags. Instead of recognizing my claim, you tried to murder me. You sent me aloft to a job which would have killed me had I not been warned."

"And I'm d— sorry," spluttered the captain in a burst of rage, "that you didn't come down by the run and break yer neck. Take these irons off my legs, and I'll land you at the nearest port and be d—d to you."

"This will do," said Breen, coldly. "Stand up, the pair of you."

The mate had by this time assumed a sitting posture, but was hardly in condition to speak.

"Stand up," repeated Breen. "Catch one another by the shoulders and stand up, or we'll lift you with ropes around your necks. Quickly!"

Breen's earnestness was more than evident. They looked at his stern countenance, forward to the observant watch on deck clustered near the

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galley door, and into each other's eyes. Then they gripped each other's coat sleeves and hove themselves erect.

"March," commanded Breen, "to the poop steps, climb them, and make your way to the lazarette hatch."

The captain backing, and the wakening mate following unsteadily, they moved in this reversed lock-step to the poop stairs, which they mounted slowly and painfully. Then they passed along the alley, cursing their victors furiously as they went, and stumbled around before the amazed helmsman to the lazarette hatch. Sawyer was ahead of them and lifted the cover. Breen and Dick were close behind.

"Down you go," said Breen. "Remember that I am the legitimate commander of this ship, empowered by law to enforce my orders with powder and shot."

He held his rifle carelessly in line with their heads, and Dick still carried the revolver. They seated themselves on the hatch combing, inserted their legs, and floundered down to the flooring below.

"You will be ironed by the legs to a stanchion," said Breen, looking down; "but your hands will be left free, and you will receive medical attention; you will be closely watched, however, and any overt act of resistance or insubordination will

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result in your death. I will shoot you in irons. Mr. Sawyer, make them fast to a stanchion, and tell the steward to nurse their hurts and feed them the forecastle allowance."

"Very good, sir." And Sawyer went forward with a joyous grin on his face, while Breen mounted the house and went to the mizzen-mast.

"Come up here, Halpin," he said.

He was examining the Nova Scotiaman through the glasses when Dick reached his side.

"We'll ask a few more questions," he said. "We know that the *Maine* is destroyed, and that war is expected — that is all." Breen consulted the code-book. "Lucky I remembered what C — G — N meant," he added, turning the leaves. "It's a stock question in all navies. The skipper would have signalled the next letters above, which merely make an irrelevant statement. We might not have got this news. Run up C — B — T, and ask if there are any men-of-war about."

Dick hoisted this signal, and the other ship responded with a series which Breen interpreted and jotted down on the captain's envelope. When finished, he read to Dick: —

"Spanish *Temerario*, Montevideo — American *Buffalo*, purchased, Rio Janeiro — American *Oregon*, sailed, San Francisco, March 19, Cuba."

"The *Oregon* sailed March 19th," said Breen

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when he had done some multiplying on the envelope. "She must be off the Horn, now, or in the Straits. She'll likely coal at Punta Arenas, possibly at Montevideo, and surely at Rio. We'll keep away from Montevideo for the present — while the *Temerario* is around. Our place is Rio. With fair luck we can make Rio in time to join the *Oregon*, and then — war. Know what it means, Halpin?"

"Are you sure, sir, that we'll have it?"

"We've got to. I won't have it otherwise.

"We'll ask more news," said Breen at length, turning the leaves. "Hook on D — H — C — L. That asks, 'How many were killed?' Then we'll give the *Maine's* name."

The answer to these signals was a couple of hoists which indicated "two hundred and sixty."

"That'll be enough," said Breen. "Two hundred and sixty — some of them our friends, perhaps. I knew all her officers. Oh, there'll be war, Dick. Run up the ensign and dip it. Funny, but I feel better."

The steward joined them as Dick hoisted the ensign.

"Where will you eat, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"At the cabin table as master of this ship," said Breen. "This is Mr. Halpin, first mate. Treat him as such. Mr. Sawyer is still second

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mate, and there will be no change in his position for the present. Call him to dinner and serve him at once. Then prepare the bath-tub and procure from the slop chest two suits of clothing, the best that you have, — shirts, underclothing, socks, shoes, everything complete."

"Yes, sir — yes, sir."

The steward went down, most certainly impressed.

At one bell, before the port watch went to dinner, Breen braced the ship sharp on the port tack; and though the men, when they began the work, moved with a deliberation that was a sure index of their doubt and dissatisfaction, it left them before many of Breen's sharp, clear-cut orders burst over their heads; and later in the afternoon, when he took sights for his longitude with Captain Bilker's sextant, they gave evidence of being as fully impressed as was the steward.

Le roi est mort. Vive le roi! Great is the power of promise and powder and shot!

Three weeks later, with the Sugar Loaf bearing ahead and to port, Breen took his eyes from a spot on the southern horizon to back the main-yards and receive a Rio Janeiro pilot.

"What's the news from the United States?" he asked.

"War declared on Spain nine days ago. Didn't you know? Havana's blockaded, and we're on

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the lookout here for the *Oregon* and *Marietta*. Seen anything of 'em?"

"What do you make of that?" answered Breen, handing him the binoculars, and pointing to the southward. The pilot looked.

"*Oregon*," he said shortly. "The *Marietta* is just astern of her. Just my luck. I'd ha' taken her in if you hadn't come along."

The spot grew larger and took on form, — a broad-beamed, one-masted, two-funnelled floating fortress, — rushing along at steam-yacht speed, with the pygmy consort in her wake. At the entrance to the harbor the two passed the *Mary Earl*, the big battleship ploughing up a bow wave halfway to the top of her ram bow, her funnels belching, her engines humming — hundreds of white-clad men dotting her deck.

"Halpin, we're just in time," said Breen, with glistening eyes. "We'll report to her captain instead of the consul. It will save complications. We'll go north in the *Oregon*."

"And the ship?" asked Dick.

"Can take care of herself. The official log has our confessions. Let Sawyer report to the consul."

They left the *Mary Earl* in a shore boat, Sawyer and the little steward waving hands at the gangway, the crew cheering from the rail and rigging. But there was one discordant note in

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the godspeed. Pig Jones, rejuvenated and revengeful, appeared on the top of the forward house with an apronful of potatoes, which he threw at them until they were out of range. Then they heard him dare the remonstrating Sawyer to fight.

"She is still a hell ship," said Breen.

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BOOK IV

CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER XLI

IT is night on the Santiago blockade — a hot July night conducive to profanity and excessive libations at the scuttle-butt; a night when men breathe the muggy air with extra muscular effort, and care little for their speech or personal appearance; when officers don pajamas and maintain dignity with white uniform caps — when seamen strip to underclothing, and, unspokenly, consign dignity to the lower regions.

There are three lines to this blockade: an outside semicircle of the heavy ships, — turreted fighters, with range of gun fire greater than the radius; an inner line of torpedo boats, converted yachts, and swift tugs, — messengers and despatch bearers, the light cavalry of a fleet; within this crescent, a row of small steam launches, — look-outs, — well supplied with binoculars, and with but one note of alarm expected and hoped of them — the signal that the imprisoned fleet within had shown signs of breaking bonds. A brilliant pencil of light, a point at its seaward end, a

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broad refulgence where it impinges on the rocky shores of the harbour mouth, indicates the presence, on the second line, of the search-light ship, —a detailed monster of the outside semicircle with steam sufficient for the candle power. She is relieved every four hours, and the change is the only diversion of the night to the overstrained nerves of the picket crews.

On the second line, with bow inshore and all lights out but the binnacle lamp in the conning tower, lay a dun-coloured torpedo boat; and close up in the bow, sprawled face up on the turtleback, with feet resting on the low hand-rail, lay Dick Halpin. He was not sleeping; he was thinking. Back of him on the turtleback, and farther back on the main deck, lay his shipmates, in all postures and in a common frame of mind. Spasmodically and earnestly they reviled the night, the heat, the luck, — and each other. They anathematized the war, the Spanish, the boat and her equipment, — everything within their ken on that hot night came under the ban but the officer who commanded and the admiral who had condemned them.

Dick, to escape the ceaseless grumbling, which could not wholly voice his own discontent, had sought the farthest corner, and lay in this attitude most conducive to philosophy, trying to solve the past and probe the future. He was the avowed

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friend of a man whom he had hated intensely a few months before — a man who had admitted hating him then, and had since won his regard in spite of himself, who had sounded his praises to two ships' companies, and had secured him his present rating of signalman in the torpedo boat of which he himself had been given command. Dick had been called aft on the quarterdeck of the *Oregon* and introduced by the enthusiastic Breen as "Mr." Halpin to a group of kindly eyed officers, who, from the captain down, shook his hand, and complimented him upon his skill with his fists. Dick gathered that Breen had described his terrible fight with the giant Pig Jones. These men were gentlemen, and their congratulations were sincere; yet he wondered if they would have complimented one of themselves as highly, and if Breen would have been so enthusiastic if the feat had been his own. Later, this was repeated on board the flagship, which they had joined at Key West, and he had listened to kind words from the grave-faced admiral, who told him that he hoped to hear further from him before the war ended. This was well — more than well; but against it was the influence of his early training. He possessed courage, surely, which he shared with bull dogs. It was the commonest of human attributes, and it was not enough. Intelligence — education —

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breeding? Possibly. But opportunity — the accident of time, place, and environment — was necessary to bring tangible recognition and reward for the best of inherent aptitudes, and it had been denied him. It had come to Breen, but not yet to him. Would the war bring it, as the admiral had hoped? He had been relegated to a torpedo boat, which ran errands in the day and did picket duty at night. He had watched, safely out of range, three bombardments of the forts, and envied men the wild joy of being under fire. He had volunteered among the hundreds who had responded to the call for men to take the *Merrimac* in, but others were chosen, and he had watched them go by, to death — or opportunity.

If opportunity should come to him, he would seize it; if not, he would be of age in a couple of months; his time in the navy would be up, and there would be something due him from his mother's estate. This he would collect quickly and hurry to the other side of the continent, where Breen's wedding bells could not disturb him. Then Mabel's face came before him, and all philosophy left him.

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CHAPTER XLII

"HALPIN," came a low voice from the darkness amidships. "Halpin," it sounded, nearer. "Pass the word, there, for Halpin." His name was repeated by others, and he arose to his feet.

"The old man wants ye," said a man old enough to be Breen's father.

Dick found Breen close up to the stern, in about the same attitude which he himself had assumed forward, — flat on his back, with his head pillowed on the bed of the torpedo tube.

"Want me, sir?" he asked, saluting in the darkness.

"Yes, Dick. Lie down here, and never mind the 'sir.' We're aboard the hell ship for a time, and there's no one near. I want to talk to you."

Dick stretched himself beside his captain, and Breen, after a full minute's silence, said softly and slowly: —

"I got letters to-day. Did you?"

"No," answered Dick. "No one writes to me."

"They write about you, however. I wrote

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from Jupiter Inlet to Miss Arthur, explaining where I'd disappeared to, and telling about you and something of our experience together. I got her answer to-day — been chasing me all around the fleet. She is very glad that you did not desert, and says that she expects to see you coming home an officer."

"An officer!" gulped Dick, his heart beating painfully, and his face burning. "Did she — really — speak of me? An officer! But that means an 'officer and a gentleman.' Shall you write to her again?"

"Of course."

"Will you tell her, please, that I am grateful for her interest in me, and that though it is impossible for me under the law to come home an officer, I may come home a gentleman. And say that I am heartily ashamed of my manner and language in the bridge car, and thoroughly sorry — and that I hope she will pardon and forget it."

"Right, I will," laughed Breen. "What did you do? Lay her out for looking at you in your old ducks and coal dust? She laid me out for it."

"Worse," growled Dick, disgustedly. "I insulted her. I'm nothing but a cad, after all."

"She doesn't waste her time on cads, Dick," said Breen, gently; "but what kind of a reputation have you up there in that town? We've

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had our names in the papers. You are supposed to have murdered me that night, disposed of my body, and escaped. Hence our disappearance."

"Oh, I know," said Dick, as he thought of the clipping Bessie had sent him. "My reputation will admit of anything; but there is one thing cleared up, which I have learned about lately. Did you know that I left home four years ago a proven thief?"

"Why, no — I heard about it; but you were cleared at the time, weren't you?"

"Yes, but I didn't know it. I didn't know until lately. All these years I thought I was considered a jailbird at home, and that's what made me so ready to lick that crowd. Pig Jones told me at the wheel one night when he was drunk enough to talk to me; but I didn't speak to you about it on account —" He hesitated.

"I understand, Dick. Yes — a brother officer. He's out there now, bullying good men. An officer and a gentleman. No, the government made him an officer, but — the most unpopular man in his class, they say. I heard about that scrape at school long before I met you — not from his sister, however — from a friend of hers. You certainly acted the gentleman, Dick, until, of course, you were driven to desperation. But — I wish I could have seen that chase over the desks." Breen finished with a laugh.

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"I always wanted to be a gentleman," said Dick, gloomily; "but the navy toughens a man, and knocks it out of him. But at that time," he raised his voice slightly, "I'd a better right to the title than he. But his father was rich and put him into the Academy, while I—"

"Rich?" queried Breen; "not so very rich—not so rich, I think, as Richard Halpin, seaman gunner for Uncle Sam. What made you ship, anyway, with all that money coming to you?"

"Money," repeated Dick. "Yes, there was a little due me when I came of age."

"Four hundred and fifty thousand dollars are waiting for you up in that little town, Miss Arthur says. The lawyers are looking for you."

"What!" exclaimed Dick, sitting up.

"That's what she says. Your mother left you fifty thousand, and your uncle—you know he is dead, don't you?" Dick nodded in the darkness.

"Your uncle died intestate, and you are next of kin. Four hundred thousand more. Whew!—and I've nothing but my pay. No wonder the girls like you, Dick." There was a little bitterness in the slight laugh with which Breen concluded.

"But why didn't I know this? Why did no one tell me?"

"Couldn't find you. No one knew where you were. I told Miss Arthur on the day you cleaned

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out the town; and I suppose you were shanghaied before the news got to the lawyer."

"Four hundred and fifty thousand dollars," muttered Dick, as his mind flashed back to his boyish plans for study and advancement. "Why, a man could be a gentleman very easily with all that money, couldn't he?"

"Yes, some kinds of a gentleman — all kinds, if he is born one. But the best society in the land will welcome you, Dick. Cut your hair, and tune up a little when your time's out. You're all right."

"But it's not all — not enough. Do you know that I'd give it all for an appointment to Annapolis?"

"All the money in the world wouldn't buy the appointment at your age. You're too old, and only the President could send you there. There may be a chance in this mix if you do good work and the admiral recommends you. Why, with your start you could rush through in two years."

"Then give me what chance you can," said Dick, vehemently. "Give me risky work — the craziest that comes along. I'll do it."

Breen did not answer. He stood erect and elevated a pair of binoculars. "Something up," he remarked. Dick also arose to his feet, and a man hurried aft with the information that the searchlight was shifting, and that lights were moving about at the harbour mouth.

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"I see," answered Breen, the glasses still to his eyes. "Watch the flagship, and see what is said. The pickets are signalling."

Coloured lights were showing from the inside line; the beam of light from the battleship on station was wavering — reaching to the right and left, exposing in its vivid glare first one shore, then the other. But barring two or three twinkling points in the darkness without the glare, nothing could be seen, even through Breen's binoculars.

"The flagship is signalling, sir," said Dick, straining his eyes at a vertical row of coloured lights far out to sea. "I didn't get the first of it, but she seems to be telling the search-light ship to do something — there it is, sir — launch. A reconnoitring job."

"Anything for us yet?"

"No, sir."

"We'll wait. Watch out."

Dick went forward, returning with a pair of glasses, and, as was his duty, kept close watch for signals; but nothing showed. The minutes went by, while the twinkling points shoreward went out in the blackness, and the wavering search-light settled down to its steady scrutiny of the channel. Presently the humming of a small engine sounded in the distance, and soon after a small gray spot on the water took on the form

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and detail of a steam launch, coming toward them from seaward.

"Boat ahoy!" called Breen softly as the launch drew near. The engine stopped.

"Hello," answered a voice — which Dick recognized. "Is that you, Mr. Breen?"

"Yes. What's up?"

"I'll come alongside."

The launch came quietly up to the quarter, and George Arthur stepped aboard.

"I'm caught," he said to Breen as they shook hands. "Fact is, I'm sent in to find out what they're doing — and that's all. I'm supposed to do some signalling, and, hang it, I haven't had time to learn the code; and as for the nightly change, why, I left it aboard. Can you give it to me?"

"I can do better — give you my signalman. Take him along and take his advice."

"Thanks — by George, yes; I'm a thousand times obliged. I've got to go in, and if there's anything up I must flash it out to them. Now I feel better."

"Go along, Halpin," said Breen, tersely.

"Halpin?" queried the young cadet. "Well — say, now, Mr. Breen, isn't this a little — he's a pet of yours, I know, but —"

"You have applied to me for a signalman, and I give you the best I have," interrupted Breen, sternly. "You can suit yourself, sir."

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"Oh, well, all right — all right, sir," answered the other. "Send him aboard when you're ready, sir."

He strode toward the rail and stepped aboard the launch. "Go along, Dick," said Breen, softly. "If he gets into trouble, get him out of it. I'll see to the credit."

"Thank you. Bully for you," was Dick's unseamanly answer to his officer. Then he jumped into the launch.

"Go ahead," ordered the cadet; and the engine started. "I am told," he said sourly to Dick, "to take your advice. If I need it, I'll call on you."

"Very good, sir," returned Dick, quietly, as he seated himself beside him.

The little craft shot ahead into the blackness beneath and without that brilliant shaft from the search-light. The young officer had the wheel. There were two other men in the cockpit, silently crouching with elbows on their knees, and aft in the other cockpit a machinist in charge of the engine.

Nothing more was said; the launch traversed the short two miles to the harbour mouth, passing the inner picket line unseen and unhailed, Dick pondering on the strange hatred which this pampered young gentleman had felt for him since the trouble in school. This was their first personal interview since that exciting chase

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over red desks, but George Arthur had been on the *New York's* quarter-deck when he had been called aft to meet the officers, and had shown his attitude toward him in the derisive smile that had come to his face, and in the superior stare with which he had regarded him every time that chance had thrown Dick into his path.

"We must be close in, sir," suggested the machinist, softly. "Shall I slow down so as to quiet the engine a little?"

"Yes — yes," answered Arthur, quickly. "Slow down — stop altogether. I can't see a thing. Can any one see?"

"Morro's broad on the starboard bow, sir," said Dick, whose eyes were good.

"And there's land right ahead — high land," said the engineer.

"Right — I see. Must be Socapa. Where the deuce were those lights, anyhow? What am I to find out in here? Nothing going on that I see."

"There was a log boom across the channel a little farther in, sir," said one of the men. "If it is still there, it proves that no torpedo boats are out to-night."

"But if we get that far," added Dick, "we might not get back."

"I told you that if I wanted your advice I'd call on you," said the cadet, angrily. "Remember that."

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Dick bit his lip, but blamed only himself.

"Go ahead with the machine," ordered the young gentleman. "We'll see about that boom, anyway."

Dick grinned bitterly.

The boat went ahead at half speed. In five minutes one of the men in the cockpit, who had been looking astern, said, "Light over to starboard, sir — well abaft the beam." They looked, but saw nothing; yet the man repeated that he had seen it, close down to the water. Then a flash as of mild lightning lit up the bluff to starboard, a crackling report followed, and water splashed in their faces. Then followed shouts in Spanish, and other shots, while a small search-light from the battlements sought them out, revealing to them as it wandered a clear expanse of channel ahead, a string of logs partly stowed under the batteries, and two armed launches putting out from the small landing astern and to starboard, where the man had seen the light. The search-light from above caught them, and a rapid-fire blast of small shot and shell ensued, while the search-light from seaward lifted and flooded the batteries. The two sailors lay quietly down in the bottom of the boat.

"We've got to get out o' here, sir," said the engineer. "I'll give her full speed, if you'll put the wheel over."

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"Yes, give it to her!" yelled the young officer, excitedly, as he ground on the wheel; and then, to Dick, "This is your fault, d— you. Oh-oh-oh o-o-o-o-o!" The speech ended in a groan, and George tumbled to the bottom beside the two sailors. Dick sprang to the wheel. "Give her steam," he called. "We'll have to run in — not out. Mr. Arthur's hit. We can't get out now."

There was no answer, and Dick, looking aft, saw the engineer leaning over the combing of his cockpit, as if he were dozing.

He steadied the launch up the channel. The engineer had opened the steam valve to its widest, and the little launch stormed ahead, followed by the pitiless search-light from the hill, and pelted by a sputtering fusillade of shot from the batteries and from the pursuing launches astern; but with four men struck down, the fates seemed satisfied. Dick felt the wind of several shots, felt the grazing of several bullets, and felt water rising over his ankles; but no harm came to him. He steered on, past the sunken *Merrimac*, around the eastern face of Smith Cay, — and here the search-light lost him and the gun fire ceased, — across to the western shore of the harbour, and with fires nearly extinct grounded the launch on a shelving beach at the foot of a hill. The pursuing launches had turned back, confident, perhaps, that daylight would show them their quarry.

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CHAPTER XLIII

WITH a little trouble in the darkness, for Dick was not a competent engineer, he shut off steam and regulated the fire; then he examined the men. The machinist was dead, so were the two sailors; they were all strangers to him, and none had spoken or voluntarily moved after the shots that had killed them. George Arthur, partly immersed in water at the bottom of the cockpit, was breathing painfully. Dick lifted his head, and gently — for this was Mabel's brother — inquired: "Are you badly hurt, sir? What can I do?"

"Is — it — you, Dick?" gasped George, faintly. "I — am — done for, I think. I got — it — in the back — the back bone. I can't — move my — legs. Can — you lift — me out of — the water. It smarts — oh, how — it smarts!"

Dick lifted him bodily to the transom seat in the cockpit, and pillowed his head on a small cork fender.

"Where — are — we — now?" asked George, when his groans had ceased.

"In the harbour, sir. I've beached her over

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to the westward. We'll have to sneak out later, when they've stopped looking for us."

"Yes. Try it. Be careful. It won't matter to me. I'm going — fast, Dick."

His voice was certainly weaker.

"I hope not, sir. If you can hold out until we get to a surgeon —"

He stopped, realizing the mockery in his words.

"Dick," said George, after an interval of silence, "I want — you — to forgive me — if — you can, for — that matter — in — school."

"Oh, don't speak of that, George — don't think of it at all. Why, you straightened it all out at the time."

"Under — compulsion — yes. To — please my — sister. Tell — me you forgive — me."

"I do," answered Dick, tears starting to his eyes. "With all my heart and soul I do."

There was a silence for a little, then George spoke again.

"It — was the only thing — that ever — came — between us — that ever came — between — Mabel and me. She always wanted — me — to write — to you; but — I would not — not — even for — her. Tell her — that I — did, will you? Tell her that I apologized — to you."

"I will — when I see her," answered Dick in a choked voice. "I'll tell her if you want me to. But it never mattered at all, George."

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"Yes — it — did. I was a cur."

His breathing grew weaker and weaker while Dick held his hand; then he lifted his head a few inches and spoke clearly and distinctly, with the last flutter of strength and prescience which comes to the dying.

"Dick," he said, "they were rigging in the log boom across the channel. It means something — a torpedo attack on the fleet, perhaps. Run the batteries and report this to the admiral. It will make you. Then" — his head sank down — "go — to — Mabel. Be — good — to — my — sister."

He said no more; and Dick did not know the moment when the wayward spirit took flight. He was weeping convulsively, for the first time since the day when little Bessie Fleming's sympathy had broken him down and humanized him.

But there was work to be done. He was in a hostile harbour, with four dead men and a leaky steam launch. Three plans flashed through his mind, each fraught with danger. He could leave the launch to the Spanish and the dead to the buzzards, climb the hill, and strike the coast a mile south; here, if not caught by the Spaniards, he might attract the attention of one of the small craft of the fleet and be taken off. Or, he could skirt the beach to the eastward, swim two channels of three or four hundred yards' width, and, if lucky, reach Guantanamo where the ships coaled,

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or the army in the hills to the northward. Or he could patch up the holes in the launch, make steam, and in the gray of the morning, when the search-light lifted and full light of day had not come to aid the gunners in their aim, he could go out the way that he had come. There was more chance of success in the first two plans than in the last; but such success would bring him only a few congratulations on his good luck in saving his life. On the other hand, the running of three batteries, the bringing out of the body of an officer, and the report — even a tardy report — of the removal of the log boom, was what he had wished for — opportunity, which comes to but a favoured few. He might die in the attempt, but then — her brother had died. If he lived through it, he would have recognition, honour, promotion — perhaps an appointment to Annapolis. He saw himself in uniform, a commissioned officer of the United States navy — an "officer and a gentleman"; and with the tears yet undried on his face his resolution was taken.

It was about eleven o'clock, and when the launch had grounded the ebb tide, as he reasoned by an inspection of the beach, was about two hours old. The water had flooded the fire as the boat settled, and now, as the tide receded, it was dribbling out through the shotholes in the bottom. Dick dared not light a lantern; he could only

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search along the bottom, plank by plank, feeling with his fingers, and stopping each hole as he found it with a plug whittled from a swab handle. The boat lay heeled to starboard, and the holes on this side could only be reached from within; but as the shots had all come from the east side of the channel, he hoped that there would be few. Most that he found were bullet holes; but here and there was a ragged aperture made by a one-pound shot, and one gaping hole near the water line indicated the work of a six-pounder. Before long he realized that the night would be all too short for the task of making that launch seaworthy, and thankfully computed that the tide could not get back until near daylight. This would leave him scant time to fire up and run out before the morning sun made him too visible for safety; but between broad daylight and the blinding glare of a search-light he would choose the first.

He found pump-tacks and a hammer in the engineer's locker; he cut patches of canvas from the white jumpers of the dead sailors, and tacked them over all holes too large or too ragged to be plugged. He worked feverishly, pantingly, incessantly, knowing neither hunger, thirst, nor fear. He was inspired not so much by patriotism as by Mabel Arthur's complimentary injunction to "come home an officer."

Daylight found him haggard and exhausted,

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with all holes that he had found plugged or patched, with steam hissing hot in the small boiler, and his silent passengers laid out on the forward transoms. It was time to go, and he was ready to go, yet the tide had but just reached the rudder of the launch and would not float it for an hour. And while he waited he watched with burning eyes the panorama unfolding as the darkness gave place to the sudden day of the tropics.

The launch lay near the middle of a concave of beach, the arc of which ranged about east and west. Off to the west, and farther still to the north, were broad reaches of sparkling water, bordered by partly wooded slopes of steep ground. To the east lay the opposite shore of the channel, which at a high bluff a little farther in broke sharply to the northeast and extended in a straight line to the city of Santiago, two miles away. There were a few habitations in sight among the trees, and here and there on the bay small sail and steam craft, which paid no attention to the gray spot on the southern beach. And after a cursory inspection of each Dick paid as little attention to them. His eyes were fixed on six black craft at anchor just below the city, — four cruisers and two torpedo boats. Bunting was rising and falling from the signal yards of all, and thick, black smoke was belching from the funnels. It was Cervera's fleet, and it was getting up steam.

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CHAPTER XLIV

NO mere shifting of berths required all that smoke, and Dick knew it. It meant a full head of steam, and this meant full speed. The ships were going out — to fight or run. Here was his opportunity, and he was balked by the tide. He pushed desperately, but the heavy launch would not move, and in a state bordering on insanity he paced up and down the beach, until he realized that the presence of the launch in the harbour was known, and that his white duck suit made a conspicuous mark against the dull green of the hill behind him. Then he hid in the after cockpit and tried to compose his nerves by grooming the engine.

An hour he waited, occasionally peeping out at the squadron up the bay, wondering why he was not sought for by the launches that had chased him in. Then a slight tremor in the boat aroused him to a second effort to launch her. This time, with the help of the reversed engine, he succeeded; the craft backed and floated, but before he could shift the helm to throw her around he felt water on his feet and knew that somewhere a gaping hole had escaped his notice.

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The water came too fast for safety, and he saw, by standing erect, that it came from underneath the forward deck, probably on the starboard side of the forefoot, where he had not been able to see or feel. He reversed the engine, heeled the boat to port as it grounded, and set desperately to work.

He found the leak — the largest hole of all — a whole plank end carried away. There was a small saw in the locker, and with its help he robbed the cockpit combing of a section, and with strenuous effort — digging a hole in the sand for room to wield the hammer — he covered the hole. But it was a flat plank over a concave surface; there was caulking to be done, and over all was needed a canvas patch to protect it from the wash. When the job was done, and he stood erect, dripping wet and faint with hunger and fatigue, the sun was high, and he saw the black ships under way, just leaving their buoys.

His opportunity was being reduced to a matter of effort expended and good intent; yet this was enough, could he but beat that squadron out to sea and make his presence known. He sprang aboard, backed the engine under a full head of steam, and the boat pulled slowly off. No more water came in. Steering by the tiller, he threw her around and went ahead, rounding Caracoles Point into the west channel past Smith Cay. He

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chose this route because, though he risked possible small-arm fire from the inshore side of Socapa Battery up on the hill, he would avoid the attention of the mounted guns of the Catalina Battery on the east shore until he rounded Puntilla, nearly abreast. Thankful for the good fortune that had given him access to Breen's charts, he rushed the little craft down the channel by memory of what the charts had told him, turned east toward Puntilla, and had almost reached it, when a fusillade began on the hilltop astern, and a shower of bullets spattered the water. Suddenly he felt a stinging pain in his left thigh, and an almost overpowering weakness came over him; but, seated on the engineer's stool, he managed to keep his balance, and soon the shock of the impact left him, though the stinging pain and the weakness remained.

The fusillade continued, and out of the corner of his eye he saw men from the Socapa Battery running down the hill to intercept him when he had rounded the point. Some paused to fire at him, and some who remained behind worked at machine guns, turning and training them on the small gray floating hearse with its four dead and its wounded driver. Soon these guns belched their message, and larger shot peppered the water around the launch. And Dick, steering wild, barely able to keep his seat, totally unable to

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feed his fire and replenish steam, yet heard distinctly over the rattle of gun fire the sound of a church bell behind him on Smith Cay, calling the faithful few that had remained on the island to Sunday morning worship. But down on the wharf of the island men had collected with rifles, and a bullet through his left arm told him that Christian brotherhood was elastic. They were trying to kill him — these men of his faith; and when they had done so, they would probably heed the bell. Seeing dimly, as though a fog had settled down on the water, he rounded the dock at Caracoles Point, and headed south, immediately receiving the greeting of the Catalina Battery. No shells were sent, but solid shot, large and small, crashed and whistled around his ears. Far out to sea lay a high-bowed battleship — the only craft of the American fleet discernible between the jaws of the channel mouth. He strained his dimmed eyes in the effort to focus and identify her, and barely knew the *Iowa*. She lay bows on to him, silent and inert. His thoughts were hardly coherent now, but with time he would have prayed for interference from that quiet, gray monster out there, one shell from which could silence this venomous hail of lead and steel. He turned, painfully, and looked back. Around Smith Cay was coming the leading ship of the Spanish fleet, a two-funnelled, two-masted,

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ram-bowed cruiser, glistening black in the morning sun. Among the battle flags aloft was the flag of an admiral. She was piling up a bow wave bigger than his small launch; she would beat him out, for he was not yet abreast of the Estrella Battery. Over the steep slope of the island he saw the spars of the second in line. There would be an action — in which he could have no share. He would be shot to death before it began.

But as he looked ahead, half blind in his weakness, and endeavoured to steady his craft to a straighter course, he became aware that gun fire had ceased. The Catalina Battery was silent, the Estrella had not begun, the riflemen from the Socapa Battery to starboard were leaning on their grounded arms and watching him. At one side stood a Spanish officer with drawn sword, the point of which touched the ground. In his left hand was his cap, which, as Dick looked, he raised to a level with his face, and slowly lowered. Dick's cap was gone, he knew not when or where, but, wounded and weak, half-crazed from the ordeal, he yet recognized the chivalry of the act, and responded by lowering his head. Then there came to him a ringing hail in pure English:

"Proceed with your dead, American."

And the leaky launch, with its crippled helmsman and its cargo of corpses, passed slowly by

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"'PROCEED WITH YOUR DEAD, AMERICAN.'"

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the Estrella Battery, whose gunners stood up and waved their hands. What signal had flashed back and forth across the channel can only be surmised. Possibly it concerned the shame of firing on an ambulance; it certainly had no bearing on or reference to Dick's dwindling opportunity — the prompting spirit of that armistice could not have guessed that this lunacy was born of a girl's friendly phrasing of a compliment.

But neither signals nor soldierly ethics influenced the gunners of the Morro batteries at the mouth of the harbour. They received the slowly creeping, half-filled little craft with roaring protests from heavy guns and a shower of projectiles, large and small. The tiller was shot out of Dick's hand, and the launch, a port-helmed craft, sheered out in the channel; a one-pound shot pierced the boiler, and the pent-up steam escaped in a wheezing whistle; a small shell exploded in the forward cockpit, disturbing the dead and shattering the bottom; a fragment of steel ploughed through Dick's already maimed left arm, and he sank in a heap; then, as the launch gently dived to the bottom, he found himself immersed, partly revived by the shock of cold water, weakly struggling with his still uninjured right arm and leg to reach the surface. Before he did so a huge black mass struck him in the ribs, and in a rush of water he slid up — hung like a limp towel over a rack — on

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the slanting steel ram of the outbound Spanish flagship.

Clinging desperately to the sharp edge, choking in the small Niagara piled up by the cruiser's rush, he looked up at swarthy faces of men above. They were sailors, and the fraternity of the sea was in them. They slid down with ropes and hauled him up; then one, smiling like a mother, forced a bottle to his lips and poured whiskey down his throat.

"What you say, eh, sheepmate?" he said jovially. "What you call him — Datch Careege? I once sheep in Americano sheep. Adios, sheepmate."

An officer called, and the men went to their stations as a gun spoke to seaward. Dick, lying helpless on the deck, facing aft, warmed by the stimulant to an interest in his surroundings, saw the large Hontoria gun in the forward turret swing slowly to port. Then it belched, and the battle was on.

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CHAPTER XLV

HUNTING is an ancient institution; it began when the first monera found others in their way. Man was a hunter when, more brute than human, he fought his enemies with claws and teeth. Then, with the development of his prehensile thumb, he brought to his aid clubs and stones. The club became a mace, later a tomahawk of stone or iron, and for the speedier propulsion of the stone was invented the sling. The sling suggested the catapult and the bow; the edge of the tomahawk prompted the knife, the spear, and the sword. Man now called himself civilized, and with his civilization came a new weapon — brain. Then diplomacy and business method came into vogue as potent weapons in warfare. Then came gunpowder, and the hollow tube to confine it and direct the projectile driven by its expansion.

These were great inventions, superseding the spear and the knife, the tomahawk and the bow, leaving only the sword — a cumbersome article of dress. The hollow tube developed into the rapid-fire rifle, the solid projectile into a shell. And to aid this gun to fire its shell to best advantage,

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science was cultivated, and the battleship — the culmination of every art, trade, and invention of civilized man, was produced to carry the gun which fired the shell. But through every change of weapon and method, in battle or in business, man, the hunter, has remained the same. Singly or collectively, as family, tribe, or nation, he succeeds and survives only by the destruction of his enemies. He is still a hunter, and on this bright Sunday morning, near the end of the nineteenth century, Dick Halpin, wounded, faint, and discouraged, played a passive part in one of the fiercest hunts that ever occurred on earth. Ostensibly, it was a duel between the representatives of two warring nations, in reality, a chase — of men by men, with victory for a prize, and with the ethical considerations of honour, glory, and patriotism but little in advance of the mercenary consideration of bounty. And the weapons of the hunters were the most deadly devised by inventive genius, ranging from machine guns, capable of sixty shots a minute, through the various grades of larger calibers to turreted rifles which spoke only twelve times an hour, but which sent pointed cylinders of over half a ton's weight through foot-thick steel walls to explode within.

Parched with thirst, and bleeding, his arm and leg numb with pain, Dick Halpin lay under the hot sun on the hotter deck, with two rills of pink-

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ish water trickling from his drenched clothing to the scuppers, — one to starboard, one to port, — and took such cognizance of the hunt as was in his power. Facing aft, he saw officers on the bridge paying him no attention whatever; later, as the ship rang with the blows of projectiles, they disappeared — he knew not where. Shells were crashing into the hull beneath him, coming from ahead and to port, but he could not move to look, nor did he care to.

Far back on the starboard quarter was being enacted a scene of the terrible drama that would have engaged a livelier attention than his. The three following cruisers were drawing to port, the leader just discernible past the forward turret; but the two torpedo boats which brought up the rear had swerved inshore, as though to avoid the fire from the American ships, and charging across the wake of the parade was a clipper-bowed converted yacht, almost hidden in the smoke of her guns. She was hunting, and her prey was the torpedo contingent. Spitting fire and steel through the cloud of smoke which almost enveloped her, the rattle of her guns drowned in the nearer volume of sound, she passed out of Dick's sight behind the turret and superstructure, then emerged into view on the starboard quarter. One torpedo boat turned shoreward, steam and smoke oozing from her

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riven hull, and a few minutes later seemed to melt away in the surf of the beach; the other kept on, smoking like her sister, until a violent explosion occurred amidships. She settled by the stern, her bow lifted like the nose of a drowning dog, then sank; again it lifted, higher and higher, until a third of the keel was exposed, and in a cloud of steam she slid stern first to the bottom.

The flagship rang and crashed and roared with the noise of shells received and sent. There was not a man to be seen on her deck, but at certain moments, at intervals between echoes of the last and the deafening din of the next riot of sound, Dick could hear fragmentary shrieks and howls from the gun-deck beneath. Men were suffering down there, and when a large shell entered the bow, and marked its raking passage aft by tremors and convulsions in every plate, the humming of human voices spoke more of agony than poor Dick could comprehend at the time. Then came a blinding flash of light at the gun-port of the forward turret, and the ensuing thunderous roar brought the horror of war still closer home to him; a shell had exploded within, and the belching cloud of yellow smoke was streaked with dark lines, fragments of — something.

The gun was silent for a while, and in the lull the ship swung seaward, offering to Dick's vision the dark green background of the Cuban hills — a

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slight rest for his aching eyes. But there was no rest for his ears nor his nerves; the crashing of shot and shell, and the chattering and roaring of guns continued, and, in a fever of desperate curiosity, he summoned strength and rolled on his side, groaning with pain, but more content. He could see the *Iowa*. She was storming along in her smoke, tongues of flame piercing the fleecy envelope, her superstructure a scintillating line of sparkling red. The ship turned back to her course and soon the *Texas* came in sight, — the ridiculed *Texas*, "hoodoo" of the fleet, — blazing away with her sponson guns and keeping pace with the invincible *Iowa*. Then appeared the three-funnelled *Brooklyn*, the racer, the happy compromise of armour, guns, and coal supply. The rattle of her powerful secondary battery rivalled the sound of musketry, and was distinguishable, even at the distance, above the storm of battle. Wavering in his glances, Dick looked for the *New York*, but she was not in sight; neither was the torpedo boat to which he belonged, but apparently rising out of the sea, between the *Iowa* and the *Texas*, appeared the monster *Oregon*, the battleship which had taken him north from Rio Janeiro. She flamed with fire and hid behind her smoke, then emerged, blazing ceaselessly and rushing on. Dick watched her a few moments with darkening faculties, noted the position of the second ship of the Spanish

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squadron out to sea and of the third drawing ahead of them all, then fainted from pain and thirst and loss of blood.

Pain, that had helped deprive him of consciousness, brought it back. Pain that he had never known before afflicted him; he was writhing on a hot deck, suffocating with smoke and the fumes of burning woodwork. The engines had stopped, and the only gun-fire to be heard was far away, where the hunt was still on. Around him in the smoke were men stricken like himself, and worse —men who had crawled up from the blast furnace buzzing and humming beneath the hot deck. Some, groaning and wheezing as they crawled, were moving slowly toward the rail, through which a few succeeded in dropping. Others remained where the last weakness had overtaken them. A momentary clearing of the smoke showed to Dick the after part of the ship in flames, the foremast gone, and in the fighting top on the mainmast the body of a man leaning over as though hailing the deck. There was a jarring vibration in the hull and an occasional note in the roar of flame that sounded like surf beating on rocks. The ship was beached and deserted by all able to move.

A hail rang out from overboard: "On deck, there, ye poor divils. Can any o' yez take a line? Stand by."

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A rope whirled snakelike high over the rail and dropped, but there was none to take it; it was withdrawn, and then it came again in the form of a running bowline which settled over a stanchion. It was tautened, and a man climbed aboard — a bare-waisted, bare-headed man with a bearded red face.

"Oh, Mither o' Mercy, boys, what a sight!" he shouted in mournful tones. "Come up — come up, boys. There be some alive."

"Morrisey — Morrisey," gasped Dick. "Here — give me a hand."

Morrisey sprang toward him and peered into his face.

"Dick, be the powers!" he shouted. "Bronson, below there. Here's Dick, fryin' in his own juice. Oh, ye poor bye, and how come ye here wi' the dagoes?"

He lifted Dick in his arms and turned toward the rail. Other men were swarming up, and the leader, a giant of a man, took him from Morrisey. Disdaining the slow descent by the rope, he sprang with him into the sea; for Dick's clothing, dried by the heat, was in flames.

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CHAPTER XLVI

NEARLY four months after the sailing of the *Mary Earl*, about the time that Dick and Breen joined the fleet, the following appeared in an issue of the *Allville Evening Times*: —

"A little light is shed on the mysterious disappearance of Ensign Breen, United States navy, by the story of Mayor Arthur, who, with his son and daughter, was a guest of Mr. Breen aboard his ship on the afternoon of the day on which he disappeared. It seems that the young ruffian Halpin, who instigated the riot in our streets, is, or was, a member of the crew, and was given shore leave on that afternoon. He accompanied the party out of the navy yard, and carried Mr. Breen's grip to the gate. Mr. Arthur observed that they had words at the gate when Halpin surrendered the grip, and that the sailor seemed in a rage. Later, at the New York terminal of the Brooklyn Bridge, Mr. Breen requested the mayor to take his grip to the Grand Central Station, and started in pursuit of Halpin up Park Row. It is known that Mr. Breen has never called for his grip, and as war is on, it is more than likely that he would have reported for duty if alive. The scoundrelly Halpin has not since been seen. What tale of foul play and murder will come to light when he is caught can only be surmised."

Miss Bessie Fleming read this with dilated eyes

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at the supper table. The meal being over, she took the paper to her room and read it again, then sat thinking for a full quarter of an hour. She sat where her face was reflected back to her from a large mirror, and a passing abstracted glance showed her its tense expression. She arose and inspected herself at full length. Though never careless of her dress, and most certainly arrayed as a young lady might be in her own home, yet her eye caught little details which betrayed the indifference which had come to her regarding her appearance. Her face was pale now, very pale, and there was a worn look in it — a slight drooping at the corners of her mouth — which, at her age, could easily become fixed. Her whole appearance indicated pain, incessant and tormenting.

But as she looked a light came to her eyes and a faint tinge to her cheeks; her breath came faster, and the lines about her mouth hardened a little, then sweetened to a smile — a bitter smile, to be sure, but a smile, an improvement in the pathetic face. She went to a closet and brought forth gowns and garments, hats, boots, and belts. From boxes and receptacles came gloves, ribbons, and handkerchiefs. She laid out the exhibit — a wealth of splendour which a woman might imagine, but no man describe — and stood off to choose. An hour later, equipped for battle, she went forth,

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rang the bell of a large brick house around the corner, and sent up her card to Miss Mabel Arthur.

She was a symphony in colour, and even harmonized with the fittings of the parlour.

But another harmony came down to meet her — a creature fluffily gowned in tulle but little darker than her crown of coiled hair, with but two relieving flecks of red — a ribbon at her throat, a flower in her belt — with colour in her lips and cheeks that rivalled the red, with a diamond on her finger no brighter than the sparkle in her eyes. The two poems took momentary measurements, then Mabel advanced with a smile.

"Why, Bessie," she exclaimed, as their lips met, "where *have* you been? It's an age since I've seen you. You look lovely — really you do." She caressed Bessie's shirt waist — a fluffy thing of silk — and led her to the sofa. "Take your things off, dear. It's *so* long since you've called. Give me your hat and your wrap."

"No — really, Mabel, I can't stay. I must return soon. I didn't tell mother I was going out, you see."

"Must you? What a pity! But tell me, Bessie —" and again she fondled the silk creation — "where did you get it? In New York? It is simply beautiful."

"No," answered Bessie, deprecatingly, for Mabel's equipment shed the flavour of duties paid,

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"it was made at home. I trust a good deal, you know, to Anna's taste and to mother's."

"But it is lovely, and your hat, too. How *do* you manage?"

Then followed a twenty-minute discussion of things feminine which have no place in this story. At the end of it, Bessie, with the sweetest smile she could assume, which hardly hid the tightening of her lips, said, —

"By the way, Mabel, did you read what the paper said to-night?"

"Yes — part of it. Why do you ask?"

"About Mr. Breen's disappearance? Did you read that?"

"Oh, yes. They seem to think that he has been murdered. Who would have thought it of Dick; and we had been *so* interested in him."

"But, Mabel" — and Bessie almost gasped it — "you don't think so, do you? You don't think that Dick would kill him? Why, he couldn't. Dick Halpin. He couldn't. You know he couldn't. I will never believe it."

"I really do not know," replied Mabel, twirling her diamond, "what Dick could or could not do. He seems to have a very violent temper. The paper calls him a ruffian and a scoundrel. Ruffians and scoundrels sometimes commit murder."

"And don't you care?" Bessie stood up. "Don't you care anything about it? Dick Halpin, whom

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you have talked about for years, is charged with murder. You were there on that day — you saw him — you must have seen him — you must know what the quarrel was about. Why did he follow him? You know, Mabel. Why did Mr. Breen follow him to his death?"

Mabel still twirled the diamond while she looked up at the agitated Bessie, now pacing about in short, hurried turns.

"I am not concerned, Bessie," she answered slowly, "about this aspect of the case, because I happen to know that Dick Halpin did not kill Mr. Breen."

"No? he did not? Then where is he? What has happened? Is he alive?"

Bessie paused in her walk, and stood over Mabel with eyes wide open, and hands tightly clenched. "Tell me," she added, and there was almost a threat in the command.

"Yes," replied Mabel, impassively, "he is alive and" — she pressed her diamond to her lips — "I should think very happy to be alive."

"Where, Mabel? Where is he?" Bessie leaned over her.

"Which one do you mean?" asked Mabel. "Both are alive, and one is happy — that is, if I may judge by the letter I received this morning."

"A letter? Oh — yes — a letter — to you —" Bessie stood erect. "I understand, of course. He

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is alive, and writes to you. I really beg your pardon — I did not think." She went to the mirror, and though her hat was symmetrically true in adjustment, she gave it a few spasmodic pats; then she turned and advanced toward Mabel, who had arisen.

"He was mine, Mabel," said Bessie, as she paused in the centre of the room. "Mine — mine — he never told me, but I knew — I was to wait for him. And you took him away. He left me to go to you. Some day he will leave you to go to another, and then you will know — what — I know now." She reeled a little, but recovered. "Good-by, Mabel," she added, and turned toward the door.

Before she reached it Mabel had caught her. She enfolded her in her arms and pressed her lips to the pale cheek.

"Bessie, you poor girl," she said gently, "come back. You don't understand. He is nothing to me but a good friend. Come back and sit down and talk. Let's talk about it, dear. Come back to the sofa."

It was some minutes before Bessie's sobs would permit her to listen, and then Mabel, with her arms about her, told her of a letter from Mr. Breen mailed at Jupiter Inlet. He and Halpin had been taken forcibly to sea in a merchant ship, it said; they had become good friends, and

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had left the ship at Rio Janeiro just in time to join the *Oregon* going north.

"I'll get the letter before you go, Bessie," said Mabel, "and we'll read it together. He wrote to me, I suppose, because he knew I should be glad to hear from him. But you will see, Bessie, just what my position is. Why, he began the letter with, 'Dear Miss Arthur.' That is not lover-like."

"But the ring?" murmured Bessie, her head on Mabel's shoulder. "You told me."

"I did not. You told yourself; I merely allowed you to. I was hateful, I know — awfully hateful, but it was on account of Dick."

"Then, Mabel," said Bessie, as she straightened up, "you *do* love Dick Halpin."

"I do not. I am not acquainted with him. I have had but two conversations with him in my life. I love an ideal, and of all the men I have met Dick comes the nearest to filling it. He may not prove himself — he may turn out just as the papers describe him, a rowdy and a ruffian — I do not know. But, if he is a gentleman, — I know that he is brave and manly, — if he is of good instincts, honest, and clean-minded; if he is of my class, don't you see, I think — I do not know. And that is all, Bessie. It began with his red hair. Ever since I have been able to see I have worshipped red hair. I do not know why, but I had to yield

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to it. Dick was my ideal boy, and I held to him during his absence while his hair became auburn; but the habit is fixed. I shall be dreadfully disappointed if he does not succeed in life — and come back to me."

"But the ring, Mabel," persisted Bessie.

"A birthday gift from papa, you goosie. Mr. Breen selected it and sent it with the bill."

"It wasn't kind of you, Mabel. I should not have treated you so. Why did you let me think it was an engagement ring?"

"Because, as I said, I felt utterly hateful. You had deceived me all along. You were in communication with Dick — with my ideal — all the time, and you never told me."

"Why, Mabel."

"You were, Bessie. You told me that day — that day before Dick came home, you know — that you expected company and could not come over. And then, when Mr. Breen called next day he said that he had been at your house first, and found Dick there.

"But Dick called by accident — I did not expect him; I had not seen him since he went away, and hardly knew him. Why, Mabel, how unjust you have been! I did expect company, but it was Mr. Breen."

Mabel's eyes opened a little wider, and her lips parted; then they closed.

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"But why, Bessie," she said, after a moment's silence, "did not Mr. Breen stay at your house if he was expected? An invited guest does not hurry away. And he told me nothing about his being expected at your house. I did not know that he ever called on you."

Bessie's face flushed as red as the ribbon at Mabel's throat. She looked down and around the room — then squarely at Mabel.

"I — I — do not know," she said at last.

"Was it," asked Mabel, gently, "because he found a sailor of his own ship there? You know the class distinctions in the navy."

Had Bessie agreed to this, tranquillity and confidence might have been restored at once; but, hesitating a moment, she said, "Not that, exactly."

"Then, why, Bessie, if Mr. Breen was the expected company, did he go away?"

"Because," said Bessie, her face aflame, and desperately anxious, possibly, to prove her case, "he came just as Dick was going, and — and — just in time to — see — to see him kiss me. And he wouldn't stay. He — turned — and — went right away from me, and I have — haven't se-seen him since."

And then she began crying, while Mabel straightened to full height and uttered the one word, "What!"

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She walked the full length of the room and back again.

"He kissed you," she repeated; then, as Bessie dried her eyes and looked, she turned, without waiting for an answer, and walked again to the end of the room. Here she remained for a moment, while Bessie's pathetic face took on an expression of demure resignation. Mabel returned.

"Bessie," she said, while her fingers worked nervously, "is this really so? Did he kiss you?"

"Yes, he did," murmured Bessie, shamelessly. "He kissed me — hard." She would have been less than a woman had she been able to forego this one moment of triumph — this one dash of vengeance and reprisal on the one who had so mercilessly wounded her — even at the cost of so shameful an admission.

"And you let him?" said Mabel. "You let him kiss you?"

This brought the matter nearer home; and Bessie, as a properly conducted young lady should, arose in her own defence.

"I could not help it, Mabel," she said earnestly. "I didn't think — he was no longer the Dick I knew — and when he was going I — and then — the outer door opened, and Mr. Breen saw it."

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Mabel seated herself in a low reclining chair, threw herself back at full length, and with fingers tapping the arms of the chair stared at the ceiling for a full five minutes, while Bessie waited patiently. Then Mabel sat up.

"What a fool I am!" she said at length, with a toss of the head. "He is a man among men. They are all alike, and he kisses every cook or waitress that he meets alone."

"Oh," shuddered Bessie, "I hope not."

"It isn't worth while, Bessie. We mustn't let it come between us again. It is not my business whom he kisses until — unless —" She flushed slightly — "After that I will take care of him."

"But, Mabel, do you think" — and the question was born of the deepest malice of which Bessie was capable — "do you think that Dick will ever try?"

Mabel waited a moment while she soberly studied the carpet.

"Women can always be sure of some things, Bessie," she said slowly. "I looked into his soul that day on the ship — when he stood in line with others, waiting to be counted. He may never come back to me — he may be a brute and a scoundrel whom I would not tolerate, though from the description in Mr. Breen's letter I should think he is not — but, Bessie, I saw — I know —

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that I am to him what he is to me. Wait, and I will get that letter."

They read it together, with arms about each other. It was, as Mabel had said, a letter couched in terms of friendship, containing news of the voyage in the merchant ship and some wonderful praise of Dick Halpin, but no word of Bessie.

"Will you answer it, Mabel?" she asked, as the letter was folded.

"Of course," said Mabel, and her lips set firmly. "I shall write and give my opinion of a man who can treat you so. I shall scold him as he never was scolded before."

Bessie rose to her feet in all the dignity of a woman sure of her position.

"Mabel, you must not," she declared vehemently; "you must not mention my name to him. I forbid it. He condemned me unheard, and went away. Now let him come back—when he is ready." There were tears in her eyes again.

Mabel smiled, and drew her back to the couch.

"Well, dear, I won't, then," she said; "I'll do better. I'll tell him that his rival is wealthy; that the sailor boy who comes home and kisses his darling is heir to a fortune, and is sure to come home again. Perhaps he will kiss her again."

"He won't," stormed Bessie. "And don't you

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mention that kissing, Mabel; don't you dare. He'll only think I'm talking about him, and — I'm not — he don't deserve — "

And Mabel promised, and kissed her herself into peace and tranquillity and hope.

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CHAPTER XLVII

A FEW days after Bessie casually glanced over a back number of the *Evening Times*, which she had neglected reading when issued. It contained the account of the delayed commencement exercises of the graduating class of the High School. Prominent in the account was an abstract of an essay written and read by Mr. Edward Brown on "Journalism as a Profession." The prominence given to this part of the programme came of the fact, of which Bessie was aware, that Ned Brown's father was the editor of the paper. Certain peculiarities of style induced her to hunt for and re-read the editorial which had prompted her visit to Mabel — the same peculiarities of style were apparent in both. At the newspaper office, she searched the files and found the account of the riot in which Dick Halpin was called a thief. There were the same touches of phrasing and punctuation — obviously the three articles were written by the same hand. Buying a copy, she took it home, and with scissors and mucilage prepared an exhibit of the three cuttings, then bided her time.

It came a few evenings later when she ushered

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into her small parlour a caller, — a tall, well-dressed young man with a budding mustache, and hair symmetrically divided into fluffy halves. Her greeting was formal, almost frigid, but the young man's smiling self-assurance suffered no shock until he had turned around once or twice and seated himself in the best chair; then he noticed the calm, cold disapproval in Bessie's blue eyes and arose to his feet. His hostess had remained standing, fingering a scrap-book on the table.

"Why, Bessie," he said, "what's up? Lost your mother, or — "

"No, Mr. Brown," she interrupted incisively, "mother is well."

"But — why, Bessie — Mr. Brown? It used to be plain Ned."

"I have but lately read your essay on 'Journalism,' Mr. Brown" — she emphasized the prefix — "and feel much impressed. I could not presume to such familiarity as to call you Ned after reading it. Really, I did not dream that you wrote so well."

"Is that so, honest, now?" he answered delightedly. "Well, now, I'm glad you liked it. I'm going in for it, you know, with father."

"So I surmised. I cut it out and put it in my scrap-book, it was so good," she purred. "And here is something else that I'm sure is yours. Why, no one else could write so nicely."

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She opened the book, and he approached her side, a little soberly, for the sarcasm in her voice was becoming apparent. She pointed to a clipping — the one containing speculations as to Breen's murder.

"You wrote that, too, Mr. Brown, did you not?" demanded Bessie.

"Oh — that, yes, I wrote it. The governor lets me write an editorial now and then, you know. I expect before long to have full charge of that page."

"And do you think," said Bessie, sternly, "that Dick Halpin, the boy you knew at school, would murder any one?"

"Why — why, Bessie — why not? He's a low ruffian — a rowdy — "

"He is not," snapped Bessie. "He is a gentleman past your comprehension, Ned Brown. Why do you hate him so? Has he ever harmed you? Did he harm you that day he came home? If I am rightly informed, you were the only one of that cowardly band that escaped."

"He couldn't catch me," answered Ned, vaguely, stupidly, but somewhat proudly.

"So I heard. I heard you described as a young man who could not fight very well, but could run like — sixty."

"Now, Bessie," protested Ned, "this isn't fair. I'm no tough scrapper with my fists, if he is — "

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"But you are moderately proficient with your feet, Mr. Brown; you can kick a small boy when you have others to assist you. Please do not call him names in my presence. Here is something else that you wrote."

She showed him the account of the riot. Ned said nothing, but looked troubled.

"You wrote that falsehood, wilfully, Mr. Brown. You know, and you knew then, that Dick Halpin was innocent of that charge. You knew that he never wore the name of thief but one week, for he was cleared by the confession of the real culprit."

"But — really — I'd forgotten, Bessie; I really had forgotten —"

"You did not forget; but you supposed him utterly friendless in this town, and you made a mistake. Do you care for my future acquaintance?"

"Of course, Bessie, of course I do. Haven't I been coming to see —"

"Then you will rescind in your father's paper every slander against Dick Halpin you have uttered."

"How can I? Father is supposed to edit the page. He won't reverse himself just for me. Besides, George Arthur is a gentleman and an officer of the navy. It won't do —"

"It *will* do; but you need not mention George Arthur. On his sister's account alone I would not

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have you mention him; but you will retract your words in regard to Dick Halpin — my friend from the first, understand — or I will never speak to you again."

Bessie moved toward the door and turned to face him. Ned followed and passed her, halting as he took his hat from the rack in the hall.

"I've got to do it, I suppose, somehow," he said painfully; "but it's like pulling teeth, and father — "

She had turned away from him.

Ned passed out, and Bessie collapsed in tears. She was not a natural diplomat, and the ordeal had taxed her nerves. But she said nothing to Mabel about a problem affecting the good name of her brother, even though their renewed friendship reached a confidence and an intimacy which it had never known before. And soon, this friendship was tested by a strain that roused to its fulness all the latent womanhood of her immature nature — at a time when the country rang with gladness over the destruction of Cervera's fleet, and a sister alternatively raved and moaned over the loss of a brother. It was Bessie, the affectionate and dependent, who knew how to comfort and subdue the frantic Mabel; and perhaps not the least of the anodynes for this awful grief of twin for twin was her oft-repeated formula, —

"Dick was saved; he'll come back."

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Either the beneficent effect of the formula or youth and good health sufficed to bring to Mabel, as the weeks passed, composure of mind and self-control sufficient for the small orderings of her daily life; she received and read her own letters. One, from Breen, written at Key West, and dated August 5, began with condolences, which no matter how heartfelt the sympathy of friend for friend, can only be expressed in a few stultified phrases of hackneyed English; then followed more business-like news, derived at first hand from the wrecking party that had raised the sunken steam launch in the Santiago channel, to the effect that the tide had washed all the bodies away, and that the chances were against their being recovered; then the writer, drifting into the slap-dash style of a man writing hurriedly in the midst of duties, had this to say:—

"I have spent an hour with Dick Halpin at the hospital ashore here; he is doing well, considering that he was shot full of holes, half-drowned, rammed by a big, fast cruiser, and then nearly roasted alive—in the language of Seaman Morrisey, who rescued him—Morrisey, of your town, who kept the hotel—know him? Morrisey said to me at Guantanamo that 'Dick wuz a-cookin' all right, but there bein' no one there to turn him an' baste him proper-like, he got scorched on one side.' Dick will pull through without doubt, but he is, mentally, in a bad way. He thinks that if he had asserted himself—think of it,

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a seaman against an officer — that he might have prevented your brother from going into the harbour. As a properly educated and superior-minded graduate of Annapolis should do, I took that conceit out of him; but there remains to him this — that your brother's death furnished him with his opportunity — which has resulted in a type-written letter from a certain high official at Washington, and he keeps it under his pillow, taking it out to read occasionally, — and you cannot imagine what this letter means to a blue-jacket of the navy, — but over it all is his accusing conscience, that, to get this letter, he allowed your brother to die. In fact, he did not; he would have been open to court-martial and disgrace had he interfered as he thinks he should; but of this I cannot wholly convince him; it is for you to help me when you see him. Your admonition to come home an officer had a strong influence on Dick's action that morning, and his dare-devil attempt to run four batteries in broad daylight, and certain admissions which he has unconsciously let slip, prove to me — well, I am saying too much. Will you please say to Miss Fleming, when you see her, that I have learned that Dick had not been home since he left four years ago until this summer? It is very likely that Dick and I will come home together, as the war will surely end soon, and he is almost able to travel, and I, on detached duty, can easily obtain leave."

Mabel read the letter to Bessie, then said: "Father will invite them here, for he was with George when he died. Shall you be here when they come, Bessie?"

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Bessie shivered, flushed, and steadied herself.

"No, Mabel, he will bring Dick home, of course, and he will come to you first. But — I shall be in my own home."

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CHAPTER XLVIII

THREE weeks later Breen and Dick boarded an afternoon train at the Grand Central Station in New York. Both were in the undress uniform of commissioned naval officers; but, even aside from this change, few of Dick's old messmates would have recognized him. His eyes held the soft light, and his features the super-refinement which always comes of extreme physical suffering. He was paler than usual, and a master of the "dapper art" had reduced his wavy hair to fashionable length and contour, and a sick-bed growth on his erstwhile smooth face to a compact and becoming mustache. It was Breen who had groomed him — Breen who had captiously criticised the tailor's work to the last wrinkle and misplaced line of stitching, who had accompanied him to the navy yard for his pay and honourable discharge as seaman apprentice, and while there made much of him to officers, old and young — gentlemen all, who cordially welcomed him as one of themselves and candidly envied him his record. Then he had engineered him to the station to accept Mr. Arthur's invitation to visit his home.

"It's too cheap," Dick protested, as they took

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seats, "this jumping into uniform at the first chance."

"You were told to come home an officer," said Breen, firmly, "and you're going to do it. It is my part to see that you do."

"But do you think — it's all right in your case — but in mine, won't she — won't Miss Arthur see through the sham? Will she think any better of me for this dressing to a part?"

"You are an acting ensign of the United States navy," answered Breen, thumping his knee with his fist. "You are on sick leave under orders from the Secretary of the Navy to report, when well, to Annapolis for special instruction. What more do you want, Dick?"

"You see," went on Dick, "I've always looked up to her, and —"

"Out with it. I gathered by your half-crazy talk at Key West that you loved her."

"Well — yes," said Dick, defiantly. "I never could help it, although I haven't met her but twice in my life. But I can keep my place, I promise you, and when you're married —"

"When who's married?"

"You and Miss Arthur; when —"

"She and I will never be married if I can help it. What put that into your head? She never allowed me to get fond of her."

"Why, aren't you?" gasped Dick, leaning back

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against the cushion. He was still weak from sickness and vulnerable to shock. "I was told so — Miss Fleming —" He stopped, not knowing how far he might be violating a confidence.

"Bessie told you? What game is she playing, anyhow," said Breen, with a puzzled face. "Well, no matter. I'll know before long; but tell me, Dick," he added earnestly, "is there, or rather was there, anything between you and Bessie?"

"Nothing but what you saw," said Dick, dimly beginning to realize the truth. "I hadn't seen her since leaving school — we were chums then — and I called to get news of the gang I was after; then, as I was about to leave, I obeyed an impulse."

"And so did I," said Breen, musingly. "I've been a jealous fool. How did she take it — if it's a fair question?"

"She put me out," answered Dick, gloomily; "hated me — I was never to speak to her again. And she wrote her further opinion of me to the *Vermont*."

"Did she?" laughed Breen. "Bless her — and sent the letter in my care, and made matters worse. She must have known that I'd recognize her handwriting. I thought you were in close correspondence, and that it was a delicate hint for me to step down and out."

"No; I never got such a roasting in my life;

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and she even enclosed a clipping from the paper calling me all sorts of hard names. It was in that letter that she told of your engagement to Miss Arthur. Why, she spoke of the engagement ring — a diamond."

"A diamond? Yes, I selected one for her and sent it from New York; but her father paid for it."

"It was easy for me to believe it," said Dick. "She had teased me about you in the house, and after my eviction I followed you to the corner and saw you call at the Arthurs'."

"There's something funny behind all this, Dick," said Breen, after a moment's thought. "It was Miss Arthur herself who clinched my suspicions concerning you and Bessie. I understand now what ailed you in the navy yard, but thought you were an all-round crank, sore at me for catching you kissing your best girl. Dick, we've done well. In spite of this mutual distrust and jealousy, we've managed to become good friends. Let it go at that for the present."

"I've a hazy remembrance, or it may be that I dreamed it, that you began something about this matter in that back room where we were drugged. But I cannot recollect just what it was."

"I can," said Breen, decidedly, "every word of it; but there's no occasion to repeat it now. We are too close to the climax. I wonder," he added

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softly and slowly, as he leaned back and closed his eyes, "what my reception will be. There are degrees of asininity; where do I stand?"

Dick could not tell him, and was satisfied with silence and the music of his own thoughts, until the train reached Allville.

Mabel's father, sad-faced but genial, met them on the platform.

"I received your telegram," he said, as he shook hands with Breen, "and hurried over to meet you; but I have only a few minutes, — board meeting, you see, and I am wanted, — and this is Mr. Halpin," he added, offering Dick his hand. "I recognize you as the sailor who revolutionized our town government — this, in fact, is the business before the board. I congratulate you, young man, on your promotion. You were with my son when he died, I hear" — the old gentleman's voice quavered a little — "and when we have time you must tell me how he died."

"I can tell you now, Mr. Arthur," said Dick, gravely and earnestly; "he died like a man — a brave man."

"I am glad to hear that — but — you must tell me all. Meanwhile, both of you, consider my house your home while you are here. Mabel is expecting you. I cannot be at dinner, I fear; but you will go at once to the house, will you not?"

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"Thank you, no, Mr. Arthur," answered Breen. "We'll call in the evening. We're a little travel-stained at present."

"Well, I'm off. I will see you in the evening."

They went to the Hotel Morrisey, still wearing its large sign, though the versatile Morrisey was replaced by a stranger.

"Did I tell you," asked Dick, as they seated themselves in the dining room, "that Morrisey and Bronson came to see me in the hospital? Morrisey lost his license on account of the trouble, but he still owns this place. The plan is for Bronson to take out the license when their time is out, and settle down as Morrisey's partner."

"Good wind-up for an old sailor," remarked Breen, as he reached for the bill of fare. "Hello, what's the matter with him?"

A young man had hurriedly entered the dining room, but, on seeing the two officers at the table, had turned, and as hurriedly bolted from the room.

"It's Ned Brown," said Dick, with a laugh, "the only one of the crowd that I missed that day. Perhaps he feared his turn had come."

They caught a momentary glimpse of Ned through the open door, negotiating with a newsboy; then he disappeared from sight, and the boy, hat in hand, entered the dining room and advanced toward them.

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"Mr. Brown's compliments, sir, to Mr. Halpin," he said, and laid a paper before them. Then he vanished, while Dick glanced through the paper.

"Things certainly are coming my way," he said at last. He handed the paper to Breen, with his finger marking a column. "Read it aloud. I only read part." Breen read the following: —

"Through misapprehension and misinformation on our part, we have in these columns made certain disparaging comments on Richard Halpin, formerly a native of Allville, and who, as most of our readers will remember, returned lately and served out some poetic justice to certain enemies of his schooldays. Among the comments we made at the time, and which we take pleasure in retracting, was one concerning his honesty, wherein we erroneously charged him with being expelled from school for stealing. As we learn, such a charge was made, but we are aware now that Mr. Halpin was clearly and honourably cleared of the stigma at the time it happened. Mr. Halpin has acquitted himself with great credit to himself as a sailor in the navy during the late war, having won his spurs, or rather his epaulettes, by cool-headed daring during the blockade of Santiago. Mr. Halpin is shortly expected to visit Allville, where, we are informed, a large property awaits him. It is hoped that he will continue to make Allville his home."

"And not a word about the man that stopped the riot and saved all their blooming lives," remarked Breen, with a grimly humorous frown. "They'll

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make a hero of you, Dick, if you allow it. They'll give you a sword and gold epaulettes and make speeches over you; and you'll have to respond, and say how your heart always warmed to your old home."

"Not much," shivered Dick. "Not while I can run. Still it is good to read such things about yourself when you've felt for years that every one thought the reverse of you. Look! We're holding a levee — look at them!"

A shifting, shuffling crowd of men and boys passed back and forth before the door and windows, peeping in as they passed. Another crowd was gathering in the office, respectfully inspecting the two as they ate. From this crowd came a man through the door — a sun-burned man carrying a horse-whip.

"And this is Dick," he said boisterously, as he reached out his hand. "Ned's lad Dick. Oh, we've kept track o' you, lad, out on the farm. I'm not goin' to stay and disturb you now, only I've just got to stop and shake hands and clap you on the back. Bully for you, Dick; and say, just consider to my credit, won't you, that if I'd given you a job on my farm, you wouldn't be here now, would you?" He brought his open hand down on Dick's shoulders with force that hurt, and was gone.

"Mr. Bronson," said Dick, in answer to Breen's

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inquiring glance. "First man I asked for work. And here's Mr. Clark." He rose to his feet.

"I've just a minute, Richard," said the schoolmaster, approaching from the street door; "just a minute in which to congratulate you. Mr. Arthur has just informed me of your arrival. There is no success like success, Richard, is there? Really, I think I can say that you are the most successful of all my pupils. Have you brought your body-guard this time?"

"No, Mr. Clark," answered Dick, respectfully. "Let me introduce Mr. Breen of the navy — my old teacher, Breen. I hope you don't think that I've declared endless war, sir."

"I should hope not," said the principal with a forgiving smile. "For in that case we will need a larger police force than we are getting. You will remain with us awhile? Yes? Well, I will see you again. By the way, at Mr. Arthur's suggestion, a few of us have considered — er — a little banquet — a reception, you know. Naval heroes are scarce with us and we must make the most of them."

He hurried away before Dick could reply, and Breen sank back in a fit of laughter.

"Told you so," he sang, as he looked into Dick's worried face.

"I'll clear out first," said Dick, savagely, "and I can't stand much more of this, either," he

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looked at the still growing crowd without, "Let's bolt this grub and get out of sight."

They finished the meal and sought the parlour, from which, two hours later, they emerged, to enter a cab, neither being willing to head a parade through the streets, and in less than ten minutes stood in Mabel Arthur's parlour, — Breen with a joke and a smile for everything, Dick, sober and somewhat ill at ease. He had fought his way to this new world, but it was yet strange to him.

An inner door opened, and Mabel appeared, gowned in black, but with colour in her cheeks, and the beauty in her face unmarred by the sorrow in her eyes. With the old swift glance at both, she advanced, smiling slightly to Breen, but paying no attention at all to Dick.

"I am glad you've come at last," she said, in the full, musical tones which Dick could only remember in his dreams. "Have you seen Bessie?"

"Not yet, Miss Arthur," laughed Breen, as he took her extended hand.

"I was in duty bound to bring him here, you know, before doing anything else. I believe that you have never been formally introduced" — he waved his hand toward Dick — "my friend, Ensign Halpin, of the navy — he has come home an officer and —"

"He has done well; and you — have not.

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Take your cap and go to Bessie. At once" — she spoke imperiously, though still smiling. "Do not come back without her."

"But won't you please acknowledge the introduction," protested Breen; "can't I see you shake hands with him? My friend, you know."

"I will take care of him. Go!"

She resolutely pointed to the door.

"All right," said Breen, laughingly backing away. "Dick, take warning. I'm put out. I know all about it now."

He disappeared through the door, and the girl turned toward Dick.

"He has almost broken her heart," she said. "A man should not do that."

"I knew," he answered, slightly inclining his head.

She slowly approached him, her lips trembling as though she were about to speak. Almost involuntarily he advanced to meet her. Gray eyes looked into black — black into gray. Deep spoke unto deep; and Mabel and Dick, in this, the third meeting of their lives, drew closer and closer together; then, with his arms about her waist, their lips met.

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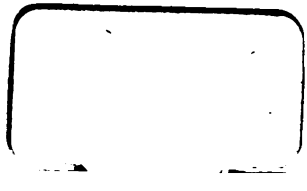

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